



"Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our mad minstrelsy!"

(Page 91)

NOT TO BE LENT OUT

THE
POETICAL WORKS OF
JOHN KEATS

EDITED BY LAURENCE BINYON

WITH A CRITICAL ESSAY BY

ROBERT BRIDGES, POET LAUREATE

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOUR

BY CLAUDE A. SHEPPERSON

A.R.W.S.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

EDITOR'S NOTE

IN choosing the poems for this volume, the editor has attempted to relate the selection, as far as possible, to Mr Bridges' Essay. The aim has been to include all the best of Keats' poetry. A good deal of immature work from the volume of 1817 has therefore been omitted, together with much of the posthumously published fugitive verse and the jocular scraps recovered from letters, as well as *The Cap and Bells* and *Otho the Great*. The fragment of *King Stephen* has, however, been included for its real interest as an essay in drama.

The importance of a sound and accurate text will be appreciated by all who have studied Keats' work and the various versions of his poems; and cordial thanks are due to Mr E. de Sélincourt and his publishers for permission to use the text of an admirable edition (*The Poems of John Keats*. Methuen & Co. Third edition, 1912). This text, it may be mentioned, "aims at reproducing, except for obvious errors, the exact text of the three volumes published in the poet's life-time, and at giving for the rest of his work what seems to be the most approved text." Mr de Sélincourt has given in his edition both versions of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, the finer first version being alone printed here.

The editor has also to thank Lord Crewe for the kindly interest he has taken in the preparation of this volume, and for suggestions as to the choice of poems.

L. B.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION .

ix

NARRATIVE POEMS

Endymion	53
Hyperion	100
The Fall of Hyperion	110
Lamia	116
Isabella ; or, The Pot of Basil	125
The Eve of St Agnes	132
The Eve of St Mark	138

REFLECTIVE POEMS AND EPISTLES

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill	140
Sleep and Poetry	143
Epistle to G. F. Mathew	147
Epistle to George Keats	149
Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke	150
Epistle to J. Hamilton Reynolds	152

ODES

To a Nightingale	154
On a Grecian Urn	155
To Autumn	156
Melancholy	156
Indolence	157
To Psyche	158
To Maia (Fragment)	159

CONTENTS

SONNETS

	PAGE
If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd	160
Glory and loveliness have passed away .	160
Many the wonders I this day have seen .	160
How many bards gild the lapses of time .	160
Nymph of the downward smile, and sidelong glance	161
Small, busy flames play through the fresh-laid coals	161
Great spirits now on earth are sojourning .	161
The poetry of earth is never dead . . .	161
Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there	161
To one who has been long in city pent .	162
Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold .	162
Standing aloof in giant ignorance . . .	162
After long vapours have oppress'd our plains .	162
This pleasant tale is like a little copse .	162
O golden-tongued Romance with serene lute	163
Spenser! a jealous honourer of thine . . .	163
Son of the old moon-mountains African .	163
It keeps eternal whisperings around . . .	163
My spirit is too weak ; mortality . . .	164
The town, the churchyard, and the setting sun	164
Hearken, thou craggy ocean-pyramid . . .	164
Read me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud .	164
Come hither all sweet maidens soberly .	164
Blue! 'tis the life of heaven,—the domain .	165
Four Seasons fill the measure of the year .	165
Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb	165
As Hermes once took to his feathers light .	165
How fever'd is the man, who cannot look .	165
When I have fears that I may cease to be .	166
Why did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell	166

CONTENTS

SONNETS—(*continued*)

	PAGE
I cry your mercy—pity—love!—aye, love . . .	166
O soft embalmer of the still midnight . . .	166
The day is gone and all its sweets are gone . . .	167
Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art . . .	167

LYRICAL POEMS

La Belle Dame sans Merci	168
Fancy	169
I had a dove, and the sweet dove died	170
Faery Song (Shed no tear)	170
Daisy's Song	170
Where's the Poet? show him! show him	170
Welcome Joy, and welcome Sorrow	170
What the Thrush said	171
Bards of Passion and of Mirth	171
The Mermaid Tavern	172
Written in the Highlands after a visit to Burns's Country	172
Meg Merrilies	173
Staffa	173
Robin Hood	174
What can I do to drive away	175
In a Dream-nighted December	175

DRAMATIC FRAGMENT

King Stephen	177
------------------------	-----

1

ILLUSTRATIONS

SONG FROM ENDYMION

Prologue

Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy ! (Page 91.)

ENDYMION

PAGE

70

Queen Venus leaning downward, open arm'd
Her shadow fell upon his breast.

LAMIA

116

The God, dove footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft brushing, in his speed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bought, and cinque-cochant in a dusky brake.

ISABELLA ; OR, THE POT OF BASIL :

124

With every morn their love grew tenderer

ST AGNES' EVE

136

Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees ;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;
Loosens her fragrant boddice ; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

ILLUSTRATIONS

STOOD TIP-TOE UPON A LITTLE HILL

142

And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne.

SLEEP AND POETRY

146

See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping
Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs.

SONNET III

158

The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,—
Its voice mysterious. (Page 160.)

SONNET IV

160

So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store :
The songs of birds—the whisp'ring of the leaves—
The voice of waters—the great bell that heaves
With solemn sound,—and thousand others more,
That distance of recognizance bereaves,
Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

NYMPH OF THE DOWNWARD SMILE

176

Nymph of the downward smile, and sidelong glance
In what diviner moments of the day
Art thou most lovely?—when gone far astray
Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance,
Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance
Of sober thought? (Page 161.)

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION.

I.

IF one English poet might be recalled to-day from the dead *John Keats.* to continue the work which he left unfinished on earth, it is probable that the crown of his country's desire would be set on the head of John Keats, for he was smitten down in his youth, in the very maturing of powers, which, having already produced work of almost unrivalled beauty, held a promise of incredible things.

Had his marvellous genius fully matured, it is impossible to surmise what Keats might not have done : but concerning the poetry that he has actually left us, the general verdict is that, while the best of it is of the highest excellence, the most of it is disappointing. Nor is this judgment likely to be overset, although some may always unreservedly admire him on account of his excellences,—and this because his fault is often the excess of a good and rare quality,—and others again as unreservedly depreciate him on account of that very want of restraint, which in his early work, besides its other immaturities, is often of such a nature as to be offensive to good taste and very provocative of impatient condemnation.

Among Keats' poems, too, a quantity of indifferent and bad *His earlier* verse is now printed, not only from a reverence for his first *work.* volume, which he never revised, and which is very properly reprinted as he issued it, but also from a feeling which editors have had, that since anything might be of value, everything was ; so that any scrap of his which could be recovered has gone into the collections. Concerning which poor stuff we may be consoled to know that Keats himself would have had no care ; for, not to speak of what was plainly never intended for poetry at all, he seems to have regarded at least his earlier work as a mere product of himself and the circumstances, now good now bad, its quality depending on influences beyond his control and often adverse, under which he always did his best. On one point only was he sensitive, and that was his belief that he sometimes did well, and would do better. The failures he left as they were, having too much pride to be ashamed of them, and too strong a conviction of an ever-flowing, and, as he felt, an increasing and bettering inspiration to think it worth while to spend fresh time in revising what a younger moment had cast off.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

*The purpose
of this Essay.*

The purpose of this essay is to examine Keats' more important poems by the highest standard of excellence as works of art, in such a manner as may be both useful and interesting; to investigate their construction, and by naming the faults to distinguish their beauties, and set them in an approximate order of merit; also, by exhibiting his method, to vindicate both the form and meaning of some poems from the assumption of even his reasonable admirers that they have neither one nor other. Within the limits of an introductory chapter this cannot be done, even imperfectly, without omitting much which the reader may look for in an account of Keats' poetry, but such omissions can be easily supplied: a knowledge, too, of the circumstances of Keats' life will be assumed,¹ and some acquaintance with his letters to his friends; and since these make of themselves a most charming book, and one that can never be superseded as a commentary on his work in its personal aspect, this view of the subject will here be disregarded except when required to aid the criticism or interpretation of a poem.

I shall take the poems in what seems the most convenient order for my purpose, and shall not trouble the reader with any other artificial connection, reserving general remarks till the end. The worser pieces I shall not notice at all.

II. *ENDYMION*.

Endymion.

Endymion is Keats' longest poem. It is the story of how Cynthia, the moon-goddess, who is also herself the moon, fell in love with the mortal Endymion. "A great trial of invention," wrote Keats, for he had "to fill 4000 lines with one bare circumstance." When he composed the poem, he was in a state of mental excitement varied by fits of depression; he grew tired of it, had a poor opinion of it, and in his preface described it as a feverish attempt.

To one who expects to be carried on by the interest of a story, this poem is tedious and unreadable, and parts of it merit at least some of the condemnation which fell on the whole. Keats thought to "surprise by a fine excess"; his excess rather confuses and blurs, and it is a severe task to keep the attention fixed. A want of definition in the actual narration,—so that important matters do not stand out,—a sameness in the variety, and the reiteration of languid epithets, are the chief cause of this; and in the second book, where Endymion is wandering in strange places, the uncertainty as to where he is, in the absence of explanatory statement as to what is intended, reduces the reader to despair. And yet it is a marvel how even such faults as these can have obscured so completely the poetic excellences from a more general recognition. I shall

¹ Mr. Sidney Colvin's *Life of Keats*, in the *English Men of Letters* series, supplies all these desiderata most satisfactorily.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

give a short analysis of the outward events of the poem, such as the reader may find useful both as a guide and for reference or index, and will add some explanation of the allegory. But first with respect to the allegory I would say this, that the minor characters and incidents are so numerous and so yielding to various interpretation, that for the sake of brevity and simplicity I must confine myself to the main points, without which there is no sense in the whole; and since, even with these, the mere putting their explanation into definite statement cannot be done without throwing the whole temporarily out of focus, I am the more content to neglect those lesser matters, in which the poet should be regarded as having, in his own words, "let himself go from some fine starting-point towards his own originality"; nor would I wish to represent the poem other than he meant it, "a little region in which lovers of poetry may wander" at their will.

ANALYSIS OF *ENDYMION*.

BOOK I.—ON THE EARTH.

1. *Author's prologue, 1-62.
2. Festival of Pan on Latmos, 63-406. [Endymion enters, 168; *Ode to Pan, 232-306.]
3. Peona takes E. to her bower, 407-515. [Address to Sleep, 453-463.] E. tells of his vision of an unknown goddess among the poppies—he dreamt he was asleep, 516-710. Peona rallies him on his love, 710-768. E. replies with his *argument on the meaning of Love, 769-857, and gives an account of a second, 893, and third, 963, meeting with the same vision, to end of book.

*Analysis of
Endymion.*

BOOK II.—WANDERINGS UNDER THE EARTH.

1. *Prologue on supremacy of love above heroism, etc., 1-43.
2. E., while enjoying the pleasures of nature, reads a message on a butterfly's wings, 43-63. The butterfly leads him to a nymph, who foretells his wanderings and ultimate success, 64-130. E. meditates on the disappointment of desire, and prays to Cynthia as his especial goddess, but not recognised as his visitant; and receives answer bidding him descend into the silent mysteries of earth, 131-214. He obeys, 218. Description of an underworld of gems, 219-280. E. feels horror of solitude, and wishes to return to the earth. He comes to a temple of Diana, his goddess, and prays Diana to deliver him from the underworld, 281-332. Flowers spring out of the marble, 333-350. He goes on to soft music, 351-363. Is tortured by the music, 364-375. Comes to a light-some wood of myrtles, 376-386.
3. Description of Adonis, 387-427. The waking of Adonis, 428-533. Venus encourages E., and enjoins secrecy, 534-587.
4. E. follows a diamond balustrade through waterworks to a gloom where he sees Cybele, 588-649. Balustrade breaks off, and he goes on an eagle to a jasmine bower, where he soliloquises, 649-706. Cynthia comes unknown to him in bower, 707-827, and leaves him asleep, 853. [*The poet speaks of the mystery of his legend, 827-853.]
5. E. wakes to melancholy thought, and strays to a grotto where he sees Alpheus and Arethusa—he prays for them, 854-1017. He goes altogether under the sea, -1023.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

*Analysis of
Endymion.*

BOOK III.—UNDER THE SEA.

1. *Prologue on regalities and supremacy of the Moon, 1-71.
2. A moonbeam reaches E. under sea, 72-102, and shines on him till morning, 102-119. [Description of sea-floor, 119-141.] [*Address to the Moon, 142-187].
3. He meets with Glaucus and Scylla, 187-1027. Neptune's hall, 866-887. Venus cheers E., 887-923. Neptune's feast, 924-937. Hymn to Neptune, 943-990. Nereids carry off E., 1005-1018. E. hears a heavenly voice promising to take him up, 1019-1027.
4. E. finds himself back on the earth, 1028-1032.

BOOK IV.—IN THE AIR.

1. Prologue to English Muse, 1-29.
2. E. finds a beautiful Indian maid bewailing her loneliness. He falls in love with her, 30-330. [*Her song, 146-290.] And accompanies her in the air on flying horses, 330. *Vision of Sleep journeying, 367-397. E. and Indian sleep on the sleeping horses, 398. Cynthia appears to E. as the Moon, 430. The Indian disappears, -512. *Cave of quietude described, 512-562. Diana's feast and hymn to D., 563-611.
3. In midst of hymn E. is borne to Latmos again, and finds there and addresses the Indian lady, 611-797. [The poet speaks, 770-780.]
4. Peona reappears, and by the identification of the Moon, Cynthia, and the Indian lady as one, the tale concludes, -1003.

*Allegory of
Endymion.*

In so far as the poem has an inner meaning, Endymion must be identified with the poet as Man. The Moon represents "Poetry" or the Ideality of desired objects, *The principle of Beauty in all things*: it is the supersensuous quality which makes all desired objects ideal; and Cynthia, as moon-goddess, crowns and personifies this, representing the ideal beauty or love of woman: and in so far as she is also actually the Moon as well as the Indian lady,—who clearly represents real or sensuous passion,—it follows that the love of woman is in its essence the same with all love of beauty; and this proposition and its converse will explain much that is otherwise strange and difficult.

*General
meaning.*

Man in Keats' poem begins with a desire for excellence, renown, and fame, and connects the Moon with his passion, iii. 142 *seq.*, that is, he sees beauty or "poetry" or ideality in his desire. This Ideality, assuming the form of the goddess, that is, of woman, *which it is*,¹ makes him renounce ambition and pursue poetic love. Next he has to humanise the ideality of his passion; and this comes about by his contact with the mystery of life, and by sympathy with dead lovers' tragedies; and this sympathy leaves him a prey to real sensuous passion. In this he falls, as he thinks, from his faith; and his sensuous passion, coming into sudden contact with his old ideals, vanishes at one moment quite away, and leaves him a prey to utter despair, iv. 507 *seq.*; and he is at discord with himself, until he unexpectedly discovers that his real and ideal loves are one and the same.

¹ The absolute identification must be intended in iv. 430, etc.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The circumstance that ideal beauty, if it is the Moon, is represented as falling in love with man, merely implies selection or election, and narrows down the application of the allegory to those men who feel supernatural visitations (*End.* i. 795), such as are the *Visionaries* of the *Revision of Hyperion*. Also, to follow Keats' meaning, it must not be lost sight of that when Endymion is visited by Cynthia, he never recognises her to be the Moon,¹ although her advent was heralded by "the loveliest moon," etc., i. 591. The identity is not revealed to him till Book IV. 430, etc.; and so, when he finds himself loving both Cynthia and the Indian lady at the same time, he remembers his first love, the Moon, as distinct from them, and says that he has a *triple* soul. There is no doubt about this, and it seems to me one of the two keys to the allegory. That it has escaped the attention of diligent readers is a proof that it is not insisted on with sufficient clearness in the poem, and it is a good example of the lack of definition in the presentation of Keats' main designs.

Keats was not making an allegory, but using a legend, and he never; so far as I know, stated that he intended his poem for an allegory (unless this is implied in ii. 838-9), so that it may naturally shock the reader to find the Moon identified with such an abstraction as *the principle of beauty in all things*. But as a matter of fact, the symbolism may be arrived at in the simplest way: the poet was very sensible to the mysterious effects of moonlight,² and felt the poetry of nature more deeply under that influence; and, that mood being given, one step further only is necessary, which is that other ecstatic and poetic moods should be likened to it, and the conditioning cause of the first, which is known, be taken for a symbol of the other unknown causes, or of that which is common to all. This is, I think, the other chief key to the sense, and it makes the difficult passage in *End.* iii. 142-187 (and see especially lines 163-169) intelligible and plain; and the poem becomes, with these explanations, readable as a whole, suggestive of meaning, and full of shadowy outlines of mysterious truth.

The general scheme of the poem is broad and simple. The four books, following the common formula of mystic initiation "by the terrors of Fire, of Water and Air" (see the Analysis), correspond with the four elements—I. Earth; II. Fire—for it is more probable that this element has been somewhat obscured in the "gleaming melancholy" of its necessary modifications

¹ See i. 606, 894, 943-959; ii. 128, esp. 168-195, and 302-332, 576, esp. 686 *seq.*, and 739, 753; iii. 175, etc., 913-914.

² And see Wordsworth's two *Odes to the Moon* :—

"O still beloved! for thine, meek Power, are charms
That fascinate the very babe in arms."

And, better, Guy de Maupassant :—

"Pourquoi ces frissons de cœur, cette émotion de l'âme? . . . A qui étaient destinés ce spectacle sublime, cette abondance de poésie jetée du ciel sur la terre? . . . Dieu peut-être a fait ces nuits-là pour voiler d'idéal les amours des hommes."

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

*Allegory of
Endymion.*

than that it was not intended in its proper home beneath the earth's crust;¹ III. Under sea=Water; IV. Air; and these typify respectively—I. Natural beauty; II. The mysteries of earth; III. The secrets of death; IV. Spiritual freedom and satisfaction. The first idea needs little comment: the last three books are concerned with states of mind which, on his own confession, lay beyond the poet's experience; and here he must be regarded as a searcher for truth rather than as full prophet. What the mysteries of earth are will appear in the explanation of *Sleep and Poetry*. Their region "beneath in the earth" is moonless, *i.e.*, unlovely, and oppresses Endymion with the horror of solitude; but even here he finds a cold shrine to Diana and immortal bowers of beauty; and at last the mysteries flush into love, and he holds unexpected communion with Cynthia herself. After this "the blank amazements amaze no more," and he meets with Alpheus and Arethusa. The reason

*The choice of
this legend.*

for the choice of this legend is very clear; they are two lovers, who, like Endymion himself, have left the earth, and are pursuing their passion underground, whence they are destined, as he too is, to arrive again at the upper air through the sea. So in the third book the story of Glaucus and Scylla has a similar fitness. Glaucus is a mortal, who, of his own curiosity and instinctive desire, has plunged straight into the "secrets of Death" from the world of natural beauty, where he was living on the brink of them. Scylla may have done the same; but the general meaning of this third book I am not at all able to supply. The region is one where the moonbeams can reach, and the phenomena of earth's day and night are dimly seen. The secrets of Death are in some way connected with magic, of which there are two kinds—the first, the earthly magic or witchcraft of Circe, who is "arbitrary queen of sense," and can gratify the sense but not resolve the secrets of Death, whose evil power she seems rather to aid; and the second a serious magic, which Glaucus has to learn before he can win redemption from Circe's curse. The meaning of the secrets of Death is probably the same as the imagination in *Rev. of Hyperion* (see p. xxiii.), but whether Glaucus is a visionary who lives entirely in the past (see *End.* iii. 327-337, 122, etc.), or whether Death has a more realistic meaning, or whether, as is not impossible, the two ideas are combined, I cannot guess. It seems intended that the sorrow of the secrets of Death can only be surmounted and their magic resolved by a soul who has been in perfect communion with ideal beauty, and has traced her presence through the whole of creation.

This episode of Glaucus and Scylla, bk. iii. from line 188 onwards, may be omitted at first reading, and it must always, though most consecutive in narration, please the least, even

¹ See the initial description, in which Vulcan is mentioned, II. 231, and the great use of gems.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

though a key should be found for it. Of the four books, of *Allegory of Endymion*. almost equal length, the fourth reads by far the shortest. As for the beauties of the poem, they are innumerable, and the reader will find them for himself, if he will be patient with the defects that so curiously hide them. Of these I would say no more here, if they did not very many of them depend on a lamentable deficiency in Keats' art, which, while it affects much of his work, is brought into unusual prominence by the subject of *Endymion*; and that is his very superficial and unworthy treatment of his ideal female characters. It may be partly accounted for thus: Keats' art is primarily objective and pictorial, and whatever other qualities it has are as it were added on to things as perceived; and this requires a satisfactory pictorial basis, which, in the case of ideal woman, did not exist in Keats' time. Neither the Greek nor the Renaissance ideals were understood, and the thin convention of classicism, which we may see in the works of West and Canova, was played out; so that the rising artists, and Keats with them, finding "nothing to be intense upon," turned to nature, and produced from English models the domestic-belle type, which ruled throughout the second quarter of the century, degrading our poets as well as painters. It was *banal*, and the more ideal and abstract it sought to be, the more empty it became; so that it was the portrait-painters only, like Lawrence, who, having to do with individual expression of subjective qualities, escaped from the meanness, and represented women whom we can still admire. Now Keats was clearly in a predicament from which neither circumstances nor disposition provided him an escape. The social condition of his parents probably excluded him from contact with the best types, and he seems to have had some idiosyncrasy. He deploras in one of his letters that he was not at ease in women's society; and when he attributes this to their not answering to his preconception of them, it looks as if he were seeking his ideal among them. Certainly what appears to be the delineation of his conception often offends taste without raising the imagination, and it reveals a plainly impossible foundation for dignified passion, in the representation of which Keats failed, as we shall see later. I conclude that he supposed that common expressions became spiritualised by being applied to an idea. Whatever praise is given to Keats' work must always be with this reservation; and he generally does his best where there is no opportunity for this kind of fault. There are exceptions, and these are, as one would expect, among the more personally inspired poems; for such sonnets as *Time's Sea*, *I cry your Mercy*, *Bright Star*, though perhaps not quite untainted by this weakness if interpreted by the rest of his work, are yet, if considered alone, above reproach.

This ideal carries much better his other more homely type *The Model of woman*, represented to him by his sister-in-law, who was no *Peona*.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

*Allegory of
Endymion.*

doubt the model of Peona, a lady who has no aspirations after the moon; a simple nature which he grew to value even more, of which in the revised *Hyperion* he says —

“They seek no wonder but the human face,
No music but a happy-noted voice.”

And it must be remembered that his behaviour towards his own younger sister was a pattern of brotherliness and natural affection, full of sympathy, chivalry, devotion, and common-sense.

III. THE SHORT *ENDYMION* AND *SLEEP AND POETRY.*

*“I stood
tiptoe.”*

The first poem in Keats' first volume, “I stood tiptoe upon a little hill,” must be considered in relation to *Endymion*, for “Endymion” was its original title, and it may be regarded as a prelude to the longer poem. It was written in December 1816, and was more worked at¹ than one might suppose from what Keats tells us of his habits at that time. The argument of the poem, though much disguised by its objective manner, is carefully elaborated. It begins with a description of Nature as seen in a walk in the then suburbs of London—already romantically remote from us—and from this passes insensibly to other descriptions of Nature, with incidental reference to the new school of poetry, which promises to celebrate Nature (51, etc.). Then (l. 94 *seq.*), in an unfortunate passage, maiden beauty intrudes, and then (113) the moon

“Coming into the blue with all her light.”

And this moon is the same symbol as in the long poem —

“O Maker of sweet poets! dear delight
Of this fair world . . .
Lover of loneliness and wandering,
Of upcast eye.”

And then (125) follows a poetic statement of the inspiration of poetry by Nature, which is unique in its bold and fanciful identification of versification with natural forms, *e.g.* l. 127—

“In the calm grandeur of a sober line
We see the waving of the mountain-pine,” etc.

He then suggests that this ecstasy in Nature may have given origin not only to the music of verse, but to the poetic ideas of such myths as Psyche, Syrinx, and Narcissus, and lastly (181) of Endymion, asserting his preference for that tale, and his wish to write it; and the poem ends (210-242) with a passage of human sympathy, as the direct effect of the marriage of Endymion and Cynthia.

¹ Letters, iv.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

This will give some notion of Keats' poetic method, but I will take one other poem to illustrate it, the last in the first volume, called *Sleep and Poetry*; and it is conveniently grouped here, because, like the one just noticed, it is in the same metre as *Endymion*, and both are good examples of Keats' early style.¹ They often fall into the feeble manner which he caught from Leigh Hunt,² and they never rise to Keats' full height, but here and there, especially in single lines, they do touch on it, and, quite apart from their inner meaning, have a beauty worthy of their author, and are very pleasant reading.

Sleep and Poetry is crowded with meaning. The short analysis of it is thus. Sleep, which figures the unawakened state of mind,³ is praised for its gentle soothing and inspiring qualities (1-18, and cf. *End.* i. 453 *seq.*) but subordinated to Poetry, which reveals more (19-34). Poetry, which represents the mind awakened to mystery, inspires with ambition and confidence (-40).

Keats then states his own devotion to Poetry (47-55), and prays to her for inspiration to penetrate the mysteries of Nature and human life (-84). He doubts whether fate will grant him length of life, and figures images of life which bring him back to a picture of the state of mind described in the opening lines of the poem (85-95).

Then in an important passage (101-162) he states the spheres of emotion through which this poetic love of Nature will carry him. Then (162-235) follow the well-known invective against the Augustan school, and his prophecy of the coming revival; and at 235 a definition of the true object of poetry, to comfort mankind; implying sympathy with human misery. The rest of the poem, 270 to end, is his peroration to his first publication, an apology for presumption, a determination to write, a tribute to the sympathetic support of his friends, a description of his refuge in Leigh Hunt's study, and he ends his book saying of his verses—

"Howsoever they be done,
I leave them as a father does his son."

This argument seems consecutive enough, but the passage 101-162 requires explanation. The meaning of it is exactly the same with that of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. In that poem Wordsworth distinguishes three states of mind following by development one on another; 1st, boyhood—mere animal pleasure; 2nd, passionate ecstasy in Nature; 3rd, reflective pleasure in Nature, *i.e.*, pleasure accompanied by or inwoven

¹ Concerning the versification of *Endymion* there is no reason to repeat objections which were evident from the first to their Serene Cavities the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*, but some remarks will be found under *Lamia*, and on p. xlii. *seq.*

² I have not read Hunt's poems, but this assertion of critics is unmistakably confirmed in Keats' Letters.

³ As pointed out by Mrs. F. M^o. Owen in *Keats: A Study*, Kegan Paul, 1880—an important book in the history of the criticism of Keats' genius.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

*Letter on
Tintern
Abbey.*

with that spiritual insight into the mystery which it is the object of his poem to exhibit. Now Keats, in a letter to Reynolds, May 1818,¹ refers to these lines on *Tintern Abbey*, and sets out his own ideas in the following language :—

“I compare human life to a large Mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it ; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us. We no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delectation. However, among the effects this breathing is father of, is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and Oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages—We see not the balance of good and evil—we are in a mist—we are now in that state—We feel the ‘burden of the Mystery.’

“To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive, when he wrote ‘Tintern Abbey,’ and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages.”

*Keats and
Wordsworth.*

I do not think that any one who knows Keats' letters would suppose that he was merely borrowing from Wordsworth, but there is no objection to supposing that he may have learnt some of his obstinate questionings from that master, though he thought out the answers for himself. The sense in the two poems is, however, identical, and it will repay us to examine the extreme difference between Keats' objective treatment and Wordsworth's philosophising. For instance, here is Wordsworth's description of what Keats calls the infant or thoughtless chamber—

“The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements.”

Keats speaks directly of this first state in the opening lines of his poem, and incidentally (l. 93), though not without full contrastive purpose, he puts it at the end of his images of human life, where “knowledge is sorrow, sorrow is wisdom, and wisdom is folly.” These images are of life considered first as a mere atomic movement in a general flux, then as a dream on the brink of destruction, then as a budding hope, then as an intellectual distraction, then as an ecstatic glimpse of beauty, and lastly as an instinctive animal pleasure.

The whole passage is thus—

“Stop and consider ! Life is but a day ;
A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way,
From a tree's summit ; a poor Indian's sleep
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep

¹ Letters, lii.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
The reading of an everchanging tale;
The light up-lifting of a maiden's veil;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
A laughing schoolboy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm."

Sleep and
Poetry.

Now the last three lines, which I have italicised, correspond *Images of*
exactly in meaning with the two lines of Wordsworth quoted just *Life.*
above, and the different methods of the two poets are plainly
exhibited. The abstract interpretation which I have given of
the whole passage quoted from Keats may serve for a further
illustration.

Of the Second Chamber Wordsworth's lines may serve the
general purpose of this essay, as giving an excellent plain
description of Keats' mental condition when he wrote most of
his earlier poetry—

"The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied," etc. (Cp. *End.* iii. 142, etc.)

And when they both describe the Third Chamber here are the
parallel passages: Wordsworth has—

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

And Keats has—

"Lo, I see afar,
O'er-sailing the blue cragginess, a car
And steeds with streamy manes the charioteer
Looks out upon the winds with furious fear:
And now the numerous tramlings quiver lightly
Along a huge cloud's ridge; and now with sprightly
Wheel downward come they into fresher skies.

And now I see them on a green-hill's side
In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.
The charioteer with wondrous gesture talks
To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear
Shapes of delight, of mystery. . . .
. . . . Most awfully intent
The driver of those steeds is forward bent
And seems to lister."

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Sleep and Poetry.

It is impossible to read Wordsworth's statement without seeing his meaning. Keats' poetry is as obscure as the "dark passages" themselves; but it is a definitely aimed attempt to express a definitely conceived thought in poetical terms. If the imagery fails to define the poet's thought, it must be remembered that definition is neither desired nor sought; and if there does lie behind Keats' poetry a meaning which it is impossible to make absolutely distinct in his objective manner, then it is not strange that his poetry should attract many who have to confess that they do not entirely understand it.

Poetry of Nature.

There must be thousands and thousands of persons alive at this moment in England, who, if they could only give poetic expression to those mysterious feelings with which they are moved in the presence of natural beauty, would be one and all of them greater poets than have ever yet been; but this objective presentation of ecstatic moods is only given in rare touches, and seems to be the reward of consummate art. The

Similes.

old simile, which in the *Iliad* is seldom more than an ornament used to enliven the description in an almost barbaric taste, may be used for a device to secure something of this evasive wonder. The poet having put his reader into the fit mood, then thrusts a natural picture before him, which is seen by him from the human or mysterious point of view; for instance, in *Hyperion*, the exquisite passage—

"Like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night,"

is not so much a heightening of the picture of those old monstrous gods, lying out "at random, carelessly diffused,"—which is its excuse and opportunity,—so much as it is a glorifying of the mystery of Stonehenge¹ and the forlorn moor, the poetry of which is seized at once by the reader, whose mood has been created for him by the story.

Nothing can exceed the force of such a reserved method as this. The intention is artistically concealed by the very means which are taken to prepare the effect, and the picture bursts unexpectedly on the reader with all the force of a landscape seen suddenly upon reaching the brow of a hill. But it is of course much more difficult to picture ideas than moods. The purely objective picturing of an idea in poetry is very like a musical presentation; and as instrumental music can give a mood, but cannot be trusted to suggest the simplest idea without the interpretation of words or action either accompanying or preparing it, so the poetic picture requires a statement of its intention; and even then it seems as vague in itself as music,

¹ It was not actually Stonehenge that Keats was thinking of, but the smaller Druid circle near Keswick [communicated].

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

because it would equally well picture some other intentions. Sleep and Keats gives a statement of the intention of his charioteer in Poetry. 123-125 and 157, and also by a few words in the picture; yet it must be confessed that he is not quite successful; and if it may be said that in Wordsworth the statement is overdone, and that what fine poetry there is, is swamped in a self-conscious disquisition, Keats reads like an Apocalypse.

IV. *HYPERION*.

Keats was twenty-two years old when he finished *Endymion* in November 1817. It represents his youthful effort towards a reconstruction of English poetry on Elizabethan lines, in sympathy with the romantic and natural schools of his time, and in reaction against the poetry of the last century. A year passed before he began *Hyperion*, his other long poem, and in that time he fell under the influence of Milton, recognising in *Paradise Lost* the model of that workmanship, the neglect of which had spoiled his first attempt. *Hyperion* was to be an epic in Milton's manner, narrating the overthrow of the old elemental Greek gods by the new Olympian hierarchy. The difficulty that the events are supramundane is met by reliance on ancient sculpture for the types of the gods, with some hints from Milton's Pandemonium, and by placing the scene on earth, where his romantic love of Nature could have full play. Hyperion has a palace in the sky, which is luxuriantly described, and he is pictured as resting awhile on the clouds, where he is addressed by Cælus from space; but he is quickly brought down to earth, where also the other gods are wandering.

The opening promises well; we are conscious at once of a new musical blank verse, a music both sweet and strong, alive with imagination and tenderness. There and throughout the poem are passages in which Keats, without losing his own individuality, is as good as Milton, where Milton is as good as Virgil;¹ and such passages rank with the best things that Keats ever did; but in other places he seems a little overshadowed by Milton, while definite passages of the *Paradise Lost* are recalled, and in some places the imitation seems frigid. Milton's grammar and prosody are apparently aimed at, but they are not strictly kept, nor is the poem maintained at the Miltonic elevation. Here and there, too, a fanciful or weak expression betrays the author of *Endymion*. When, in April 1819, Keats had written little more than the first two books, he broke it off; and though it was not finally discarded till five months afterwards, he never continued it. In his letters he attributes his dissatisfaction to the style; but one cannot read to the end without a conviction that the real hindrance lay deeper;

¹ And see again p. l.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Hyperion. for although we may say that this torso of Keats' is the only poem since Milton which has seriously challenged the epic place, it is to the style mainly that this is due; the subject lacks the solid basis of outward event, by which epic maintains its interest: like *Endymion*, it is all imagination; or, if we should accept Keats' personifications as sufficiently real for his purpose, even then the poem fails in conduct. The first two books describe the conditions of the older gods, and are impassioned with defeat, dismay, and collapse; the third introduces the new hierarchy, and we expect to find them radiant, confident, and irresistible; but there is no change in the colour of the poem; of the two deities introduced, Apollo is weeping and raving, and Mnemosyne, who has deserted the old dynasty for her hope in the new, "wails morn and eventide." Continuation in this vein was impossible, at least to an artist like Keats. Whatever mental qualities go to make a born artist, none is more essential than an unconscious enthrallment to his creative conception. When any true and sane artist has strayed into a fault that falsifies his conception, then his inspiration comes to a stand. Could he go on, as if all were well, it would be because he was lacking in the essential faculty which makes artistic work good.

The failure here is really the same in kind as the fault of *Endymion*: there is little but imagination, and a one-sidedness or incompleteness of that; a languor which lingers in the main design, though the influence of Milton is generally uplifting the language. That Keats was conscious that some of his earlier weaknesses were still visible will appear when we come to consider the *Revision of Hyperion*; but it would seem that he never rightly discerned the cause of his dissatisfaction and collapse, for his own criticism of the poem was that it was Miltonic and artificial, and he confesses in a letter of September 1819¹ to a revulsion of taste. *Paradise Lost*, which not a month before had been "every day a greater wonder" to him, is now "a corruption of our language, accommodating itself to Greek and Latin inversions and intonations. I have but lately (he writes) stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me." These last words mean a great deal, and remind one of Milton's ambitious avoidance of Shakespeare in his own later work. But Keats in condemning grammatical inversion seems going back from the great advance in style which he had made, and it is worth while to inquire what he meant. It might seem at first that he attributed to inversions the appearance of Miltonism in his poem, and that he could not afford to be imitative. But he had not abused inversion in *Hyperion*, nor is it absent from his revision, nor wholly from his other poems; and the truth is that it is of the essence of good style. In ordinary speech the words follow a common

Grammatical
inversion.

¹ Letters, cxvi.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

order prescribed by use, and if that does not suit the sense, Hyperion. correction is made by vocal intonation : but the first thing that a writer must do is to get his words in the order of his ideas, as he wishes them to enter the reader's mind ; and when such an arrangement happens not to be the order of common speech, it may be called a grammatical inversion. To take the simplest case, the position of the adjective with regard to its substantive : in French it generally follows the substantive, and this is in most cases its proper place, and for this reason alone descriptions of scenery are generally more pictorial in French prose than in English, the necessarily frequent predicates being in their natural position : in English the common use sets the epithet before the object, and when this is a malposition of ideas, a poet must invert either his grammar or his ideas ; and what is true of adjectives is true also of every word in the sentence. The best simple writers have the art of making the common grammatical forms obey their ideas, and Keats has usually a right order of ideas in a simple grammatical form, and a preference for this style over more elaborate constructions is no doubt what he intended to advocate, and this is well enough : but it must be remembered that he often gets good effect from the proper use of inversion, which is present where least suspected ; and also that he does not refuse to invert the grammatical order for the sake of rhyme or metre, which, though it may occasionally be a beauty, is generally a licence or abuse, a resource of bad writers, and almost as much to be condemned as those needless or false inversions which are sometimes used by bad writers to give the effect of heightened style.

If now, for the convenience of pursuing our subject, we consider the *Revision of Hyperion*, we must remember that we are passing over Keats' most important work,—for it was between September 1818, when he began *Hyperion*, and September 1819, when he discarded it, that is, when he was under the Miltonic influence, that almost all his best work was done,—and we shall now be dealing with what was really a transitional period, though its development was arrested, as under the torture of passion, disappointment and mortal disease his bright hopes of poetic attainment faded from him, and his voice was silenced for ever.

He had been disappointed, too, in a resolution which he had made to support himself and those whom his generosity invited to look to his talents for assistance, by doing some hackwork independent of his poetry ; and he had returned dispirited to Hampstead (October 1819), the home of his unfortunate passion, and there, hiding from his friends his restlessness and gloom, had betaken himself again to composition. By some paradoxical devilry, moreover, he devoted the best hours of the day to supplying the market with a comic poem in the Byronic vein, *The Cap and Bells*, and worked in the evenings only, when

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Hyperion. fatigued and distracted, at the *Revision of Hyperion*, which might be in itself enough to account for any inferiority in the execution. This fragment is very interesting; first, it shows a new departure in style,—and Keats now deliberately deserts his old manner of relying chiefly on the objective presentation of his ideas by pictures of sensuous imagery and beauty (as described pp. xiii., xiv.); and, as if he were conscious of his want of success in definition, he now introduces a character who discusses with the main person the meaning of what is pictured;—secondly, it shows a deliberate resumption of his old allegorising vein, which we found in *Endymion* and the early poems; and thirdly, it is the most mature attempt that he ever made to express some of his own convictions concerning human life. It is in this third aspect that the chief interest lies, and it is strange that its matter should not have prevented the *Revision* from passing for a first draught, with such critics as

Style. might overlook the evidence of the form. The style, being evidently less mastered than in the longer poem, might at first sight deceive; but it should not have deceived, for, in spite of the inefficient execution, it is in some respects an advance; it aims at a greater severity and has a more thoughtful power than any of Keats' other work. But the evidence of the alterations of the passages common to the two versions is glaring. For instance, it was an old habit of his to make frequent use of

Invocation. invocation, as almost any page of *Endymion* will show: now in the *Revision of Hyperion* there is not a single vocative O admitted; and if we examine a passage which contained such O's in the original, and which is kept in the *Revision*, we shall see how their exclusion accounts for the alterations: for example, *Hyp.* i. 50:—

“Would come in these like accents: O how frail
To that large utterance of the early gods!
Saturn, look up! though wherefore, poor old king?
I have no comfort for thee, no not one:
I cannot say, ‘O wherefore sleepest thou?’
For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a god.”

The O's being proscribed, the first line is altered in *Revision*, 328, to

Would come in this like accenting: how frail!”

and the fifth line to

“Wherefore thus sleepest thou?”

And this new *thus* drives out the original *thus* from line 7, which now becomes *so afflicted*. He then sees the two *wherefores* and alters the third line to *and for what, poor lost king*; the change of *lost* for *old* being made to avoid the hackneyed *poor old*.

(*Dante*.)

And besides this conscious correction of old faults, it is now for the first time that the influence of Dante appears, and that

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

not merely in the gravity of the vision in this poem, which is Hyperion
unlike any other of his embodiments, and in the sort of connection conceived between his vision of doom and his own experience and poetic meaning, all which he might have come at through a translation, but in echoes of the Italian balance in passages where the sense is like Dante's, as in this—

“High prophetess, said I, purge off,
Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film.”

And also where there is only the indefinable and individual touch to point to, as in—

“When in mid-day the sickening east-wind
Shifts sudden to the south, the small warm rain
Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,”

where the last line shows that Keats has now added to his style a mastery of Dante's especial grace: and such passages as this, or again when he calls written words

“The shadows of melodious utterance,”

which is also Dantesque in thought, should, I think, have forbidden the later critics, who knew from external evidence when the *Revision* was written, from judging that the new style came from decay of poetic power. In these quotations there is certainly no falling off in the magic of his pen, while faults so foreign to him as the wrongness, lowness and awkwardness in the diction of these lines—

“Therefore, that happiness be somewhat *shared*,
Such *things* as thou *art* are admitted oft
Into *like gardens thou didst pass* erewhile,”

show want of mastery in his new, not failure in his old manner, and are, in my opinion, amply accounted for by the fatigue and distraction of those unhappy evenings.

To conclude this question of style, it may be added, that though the effect of an imitation of Milton is fairly got rid of from the *Revision*, and whole passages are excluded because they were too Miltonic, yet inversions and classicisms are used, and in the line—

“Saturn, sleep on ; O thoughtless, why did I,”

a Latinism is actually introduced to supplant a mannerism of his own; for *O thoughtless* is changed to *me thoughtless*.

To pass now to the meaning of the poem, we will begin Allegory
with what is certain, and so lead up to the more doubtful matters. First, it is certain that the poem was intended as an allegory; it is named *A Vision*, but of Knowledge now, not of Love, and it begins in a figurative garden, as the *Divina Commedia* in a wood, and there is a supernatural guide, who is to explain things unseen by what is seen. It is also clear that the first version of *Hyperion* was to be used to supply the vision

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Of
Hyperion.

and from this it follows that the old *Hyperion* had also an inner meaning, for it is impossible that Keats would have forced into an allegory a poem which he had conceived and written without such intention. But the original poem being unfinished, this did not clearly appear; there are, however, indications of it, and one passage, the speech of Oceanus in Bk. ii., fairly supplies the argument, which is that there is a self-destructive progress in Nature towards good, and that beauty, and not force, is the law of this flux or change. It seems also probable that Keats intended to make Hyperion and Mnemosyne instruct Apollo, and thus to show Light and Song passing into union and perfection out of elemental chaos and crudeness. However this may be, Oceanus bids Saturn take comfort in his dethronement, "for," he says,

"To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm
That is the top of sovereignty."

Of Revision.

And it is further clear in the *Revision* that this *top of sovereignty* is the reward of the poet for conduct in certain circumstances of real life, and that the whole of the introduction (lines 19-266) is an objective picture of those circumstances. Here the allegory is complete, and it is here that it should be intelligible.

And this will serve to guide us at once to separate the *Revision* into two parts, the first down to line 266, which is the new allegory, and the second from line 267 onward, which is an adaptation of the original poem. This latter part we may neglect; it is only a maiming of his earlier fine work; but the first part is original, and though it opens badly, and has some poor places, it is from line 19 onwards, generally worthy to be reckoned with Keats' best work.

Although one cannot be wrong in assuming that this allegory is a description of Keats' own life, and of his latest convictions, and one would think that his letters and poems should supply the key with some certainty, yet I would not venture very far, and would offer what I say as suggestion only.

As I read it, the visionaries are those who neglect conduct for the pursuit of any ideal. The garden and feast represent the beauties of Nature, and the drink is poetry, which is made from the fruits of the feast. The intoxication which followed the draught represents that complete and excited absorption by poetry which Keats describes himself as suffering when he was writing *Endymion*, and the swoon would be that state of selfish isolation into which he fell in his Miltonic period. His awaking in the temple is his recovery from this to a sympathy with the miseries of the world; and the temple itself is the temple of Knowledge, which it is death for a visionary to enter if he have not that sympathy. The steps to the altar are the

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

struggle of such a mind to reach truth: and truth itself is Hyperion. revealed by knowledge. The leaves burning on the altar are years of the poet's life, or his youthful faculties.

Whether or no any or all of these points are rightly interpreted, it is sure that the general meaning is, that though Keats conceived of the true poet as a prophet and seer, yet he now valued the life of action and conduct above that of meditation and poetry, and condemns as selfish the merely artistic life which he had been leading; and he is now preaching that actual contact and sympathy with human misery and sorrow are the only school for real insight, which is the reward of true human conduct, and not to be arrived at by any other path. In this way only can the poet hope to create anything of value and become himself immortal.

Moneta, the new name for Mnemosyne, must be connected *Moneta*. with *moneo*, and Memory is the same as Knowledge, and she can *admonish* or teach a knowledge of "the mysteries of earth." And this knowledge is what is required to make a poet of a visionary. She is thus foster-mother of Apollo as well as mother of the Muses. She has a harp; and when Apollo says, "For me dark, dark, and painful vile *oblivion* seals my eyes," this oblivion must be ignorance regarded as the opposite of that knowledge which is memory. Compare *Hyperion*, iii., where Apollo "becomes immortal" by reading in Mnemosyne's eyes, just as the poet is to do in the *Revision*. Thus the temple must be the temple of Knowledge=Memory; and it is fit that Mnemosyne, the Memory of all things, should be primeval, and sister to the oldest god.

The conception of her temple, all that is spared from the thunder of the war, is extremely fine in its allegorical manner, with its doors barred to the sunrise, and the western past closed by a mighty mythical image of a dead god, and an altar, beside which the goddess of the memory of all change stands veiled in the smoke of the sacrifice of the poet's life. The marble palace in *End.* ii. 256-270, corresponds somewhat closely with this temple, though the meaning is now changed, and it should be compared; but in taking this allegory to interpret Keats' mind, it must be remembered first, that all the different states through which he may represent himself as having passed, were only consecutive in the sense that he may have been at one time more dominated by one view of things, at another time by another; and though in the changing strength of his convictions there may have been a real growth, yet the different feelings were most of them known to him almost from the first, as his letters show: and secondly, that what he condemned as his selfish period was the period in which he most benefited mankind; and he saw at the time the truth of the paradox, and was tortured by the "solitariness," which proved his sympathy to be

¹ Cf. Letter xxxvii., "Memory should not be called Knowledge." February 1818.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Hyperion. alive ; and that very torture may have been his misery at the foot of the altar-stairs, on which, when he once stepped, they filled his freezing body with natural heat. There is a great nobility in all this, and considering what vile treatment he had met with, it is very beautiful that there is not only no word of resentment, but no place for complaint : he takes all the blame on his own unworthiness. But it is also very sad : how changed now is his faith in the meaning of natural beauty to men : his old ideal mistress, Cynthia, the "lover of the upcast eye," is likened with the eyes of the goddess of memory, of which he says—

"They saw me not,
But in blank splendour beam'd, like the mild moon,
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
What eyes are upward cast."

V. THE TALES.

Isabella. There are three finished tales or short narrative poems by Keats, *Isabella*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Lamia*. They are all famous for their beauty, and the first two, which are in stanza, may be said to have become almost popular. *Isabella* has, in fact, caused the story of the pot of basil to be widely known in England, as much perhaps from the pictures of artists who took their subject from Keats as from the poem itself. The story is unpleasant, and is the worst executed of the three ; but the poet has overcome the gruesomeness with skill—he parenthetically interrupts his narration to confess the difficulty,—yet he seldom stays for many lines together above his weaker vein : the appearance of Lorenzo's ghost to Isabella, from stanza xxxi. onwards, being the best sustained passage. The poem has many examples of Keats' originality of imagination and felicity of phrase, but is tainted throughout by a characteristic ægritude of passion, which makes the best occasion to speak of the curiously close similarity which exists between him and the school of painting which had Rossetti for its head. The lovers who "could not in the self-same mansion dwell without *some* *malady*," the "sick longing" of Isabella, the "passion both meek and wild," the "little sweet among much bitterness," the consciousness of something too horrible to speak of behind the scene, and all the passionate faintness of the personages of the romance,—in whom, as in a faded tapestry, the brilliance of the raiment has outlasted the flesh-colour,—have a likeness to the creations of this school so remarkable, that Keats may be safely credited with a chief share of the parentage. *Isabella* was written in February-April 1818, when *Endymion* was in the press.

The Eve of St. Agnes. *The Eve of St. Agnes*, written in January 1819, and revised in September, that is in the *Hyperion* period, is much more

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

powerful. It is well done throughout, and except for some St Agnes' expressions, criticism could only quarrel with the machinery of Eve. the story. This opens with four stanzas about an "ancient bedesman," who has personally nothing whatever to do with the tale; he provides contrast to the revelry, which he introduces by hearing it, and he also makes opportunity for describing his haunt in the chapel of the heroine's castle: but the chapel is never used again. The feast, too, which Porphyro sets out in Madeline's chamber is robbed of its motive and serves no purpose but to enrich the description. Both these strands should have been woven in; but they are selected in sympathy with the story, and make some of the most successful colouring. *The Eve of St. Agnes* is not only a passionate tale, but it is very rich in the kind of beauty characteristic of Keats, and contains high poetry both of diction and feeling: 'the majority of poetic readers would not wish it different from what it is.

Lamia, which was written between July and September Lamia. 1819, that is, in the interval between the discontinuing and the rejection of *Hyperion*, is in rhymed couplets. These differ from those of *Endymion* in showing an approach to Dryden's versification,² and in so far a return from the extreme reaction against Pope with which Keats began. There will always be difference of opinion as to what the excellence of this metre is, but the source of the uncertainty in which Keats found himself is easy to explain. The metre in Chaucer's hands came to be perfectly successful, and chiefly because it was light; and the lightness was due to the presence in his language of terminal vowels and inflexions which have since become mute or entirely disappeared. For instance, Chaucer wrote—

"As thick as motes in the sonne beam."

Milton's ten syllables are

"As the gay motes that people the sunbeams."

All the buoyancy is gone; and this exemplifies the change which necessarily came over the rhymed heroic verse. It became heavier and less adapted for narration, and at last was cast mechanically in polished couplets, which passed in a dull generation for a triumph of classic grace, and were prescribed by the Universities as the only form in which they would recognise English poetry. Later poets have used different devices for lightening the metre, so as to make it again do Chaucer's work, but the general result is that their lightly constructed verse is slovenly. *Endymion* was very successful in the quality of lightness, but it met with no favour, and the lightness was gained at the cost of other qualities which

¹ See again p. xlix.

² So the critics say; and Charles Brown told Lord Houghton that Keats purposely studied Dryden's verse: I have not myself a sufficiently intimate acquaintance with it to enable me to judge.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

St Agnes'
Eve.

Keats could now regard without prejudice. In *Endymion* the couplet and line units are reduced to a minimum of value, and with these the rhyme value sinks, so that the unrhymed lines in the poem are scarcely noticed: on the other hand, the verses are frequently tagged by evidently foisted rhymes. But in reading the first dozen lines of *Lamia*, the problem seems solved; all is both light and sure, and there are neither tags nor self-conscious couplets: nothing could be better, and a great deal of the poem is as good as this. The device of separating the couplets by a pause in the sense after the first rhyme is retained from *Endymion*, and rhyme-triplets and twelve-syllable lines are introduced. But the poem is not all equally well written, the whole passage, i. 300-350, where the subject does not suit him, is plainly below the mark, and here the tags reappear, and they are much more self-evident and offensive in this kind of verse than in *Endymion*, where they were an avowed means of construction, and where their frequency became familiar and had the advantage of giving great force to any unbroken couplets that were introduced. As for the triplets and twelve-syllable lines, these are no doubt used sometimes with skill, but among regular "heroics" they are a device of the most transparent artificiality, and by their carefully irregular intrusion they openly expose the monotony which they would awkwardly obviate. From which it would seem that they would find a better home in the less regular verse.

Eve of St.
Mark.

The problem how to match Chaucer's narrative in modern English is much more nearly solved in the unfinished Tale, *The Eve of St. Mark*, written in eight-syllable couplets with the same sort of latitude which Coleridge advocated in *Christabel*. The fragment is too short to be a complete experiment, but, so far as it goes, the light verse carries the description of the cathedral town on a showery Sunday evening in spring with an easy geniality combining beauty and homeliness, and suits just as well the indoors picture, with its combination of mystery and real life; and his mastery of all this, independently of his playful affectation of the delicacies of middle English (copied apparently from Chatterton) recall Chaucer's charm, and seem to show that he had here hit on a narrative form which he might have successfully perfected.

As for the poetry of *Lamia*,¹ it does not all go on as well as it begins, and sometimes fails too in its most highly-wrought passages. The description of the serpent is overdone to vagueness, and her transformation has the same fault. Words like *rosy* and *phosphor* assert themselves; others are dressed at the call of the rhyme; while very common expressions occasionally produce a bathos, i. 201, 330, 335; ii. 12, 15, 89, 128. Yet Keats was trying to correct his old faults; for instance, in revising, he appears to have written *silently* in ii. 134 for

¹ For a criticism of the passion, see p. xlviii.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

silverly: and *Lamia* is constructively the most perfect of his three narratives. I remark that "the taller grasses and full flowering weed" of i. 44 do not agree with the daffodils of line 184: and I consider it a blot that Lycius should die at the end; because he is killed by Apollonius, who, if he could not rescue him, should have let him alone. Philosophy or Reason is made unamiable: but I am afraid that Keats may have intended this; and he makes Apollonius laugh, which is almost diabolic. The general meaning is, no doubt, the antagonism of reason and pleasure, or of science and imagination (ii. 229 *seq.*), or both; and that reason should take delight in destroying pleasure is only one of the ugly doctrines that lurk beneath the text if it be read as a parable. But it is very uncertain how much Keats intended. He may have had in his mind the selfishness of the artist absorbed in his ideals, and his catastrophe in the justifiable indifference of the world to the creations of mere art. On August 23, 1819, he wrote thus: "A solitary life engenders pride and egotism, but this pride and egotism will enable me to write finer things than anything else could,—so I will indulge it." And in less than a month he had wholly banished from himself as unworthy this strong conviction of his duty. Lamia.

VI. THE ODES.

Had Keats left us only his Odes, his rank among the poets would not be lower than it is, for they have stood apart in literature, at least the six most famous of them; and these were all written in his best period, when he was under the Miltonic influence—that is, between the early spring of 1819, while he was still engaged on *Hyperion*, and the autumn, when he discarded it. These are the six: 1. *Psyche*; 2. *Melancholy*; 3. *Nightingale*; 4. *Greek Urn*; 5. *Indolence*; 6. *Autumn*. The Odes.

To these should be added 7, the fragment of the *May Ode*, May 1, 1818, and 8, the *Ode to Pan*, from *Endymion*, bk. i., and 9, the *Bacchic Ode to Sorrow* in *Endymion*, bk. iv. But the two hymns to *Neptune* and *Diana* in *Endymion* are only worth enumeration, and the two early odes to *Apollo* and the *Ode to a Lock of Milton's Hair* are, as are the two later *Odes to Fanny*, chiefly or entirely of personal interest.

Of the seven odes first enumerated, if we rank them merely according to perfection of workmanship, the one that was last written, that is the *Ode to Autumn*, will claim the highest place; and unless it be objected as a slight blemish that the words "Think not of them" in the 2nd line of the 3rd stanza are somewhat awkwardly addressed to a personification of Autumn, I do not know that any sort of fault can be found in it. But this ode does not in any part of it reach the marvellous heights attained by several of the others in their best places, and even Ode to Autumn.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The Nightingale. if judged as a whole it is left far behind by the splendour of the *Nightingale*, in which the mood is more intense, and the poetry vies in richness and variety with its subject.

The song of the nightingale is, to the hearer, full of assertion, promise, and cheerful expectancy, and of pleading and tender passionate overflowing in long drawn-out notes, interspersed with plenty of playfulness and conscious exhibitions of musical skill. Whatever pain or sorrow may be expressed by it, it is idealised—that is, it is not the sorrow of a sufferer, but the perfect expression of sorrow by an artist, who must have felt, but is not feeling; and the ecstasy of the nightingale is stronger than its sorrow, although different hearers may be differently affected according to their mood. Keats in a sad mood seized on the happy interpretation and promise of it, and gives it in this line—

“Singest of *summer* in full-throated ease.”

But the intense feeling in his description of human sorrow (stanza 3) is weakened by the direct platitude that the bird has never known it; and in the penultimate stanza the thought is fanciful or superficial,—man being as immortal as the bird in every sense but that of sameness, which is assumed and does not satisfy. The introduction, too, of the last stanza is artificial, while his choosing *self* for a rhyme-word,¹ turns out disastrously; and he loses hold of his main idea in the words “plaintive anthem,” which, in expressing the dying away of the sound, changes its character. No praise, however, could be too high for those last six lines; and if grammar and sense are a little obscure in the first ten, I could not name any English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this ode.

Melancholy. Next to this I should rank *Melancholy*. The perception in this ode is profound, and no doubt experienced. The paradox that melancholy is most deeply felt by the organisation most capable of joy is clinched at the end by the observation of the reaction which satiety provokes in such temperaments, so that it is also in the moment of extremest joy that it suddenly fades—

“Turning to poison while the bee mouth sips :
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine.”

In spite of the great beauty of this ode, especially of the last stanza, it does not hit so hard as one would expect. I do not know whether this is due to a false note² towards the end of the second stanza, or to a disagreement between the second and third stanzas. In the second stanza the melancholy is, as Lord

¹ The elf belongs to W. Brown of Tavistock, whom I suspect to have been the remote cause of the hitch in the first stanza—

“Philomel, I do not envy thy sweet carolling.”

Brit. Past., i. 3, 164.

² For its explanation, see p. xlviii.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Houghton said, a "luxurious tenderness," while in the third it is strong, painful, and incurable.

The line—

"That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,"

means all the flowers only that are sacred sorrow. See *End.* iv. 170.

Next in order might come *Psyche*, for the sake of the last *Psyche*. section (l. 50 to end), though this is open to the objection that the imagery is worked up to outface the idea—which is characteristic of Keats' manner. Yet the extreme beauty quenches every dissatisfaction. The beginning of this ode is not so good, and the middle part is midway in excellence.

Next, and disputing place with the last, comes the *Grecian* *Grecian* *Urn*. The thought as enounced in the first stanza is the supremacy of ideal art over Nature, because of its unchanging expression of perfection; and this is true and beautiful; but its amplification in the poem is unprogressive, monotonous, and scattered, the attention being called to fresh details without result (see espec. ll. 21-24, anticipated in 15, 16), which gives an effect of poverty in spite of the beauty. The last stanza enters stumbling on a pun, but its concluding lines are very fine, and make a sort of recovery with their forcible directness.

The last of the six, *Indolence*, is the objective picturing of a *Indolence*. transient mood, and may be the description of an actual half-waking vision. If the details, such as the appearing of the figures four times, have no definite meaning, and I cannot fix any, they are too arbitrary. Parts of stanzas 2 and 3 and all the 5th are of the best work; but the whole ode scarcely earns its title; and its main interest, that is its fervour and feeling, betrays the poet into an undignified utterance in line 4 of the last verse.

The fragment of the *May Ode* is immortal on account of the *May Ode*. famous passage of inimitable beauty descriptive of the Greek poets—

"Leaving great verse unto a little clan, etc."

With these seven the two chief odes in *Endymion* are worthy to rank. The ode to Pan in Book I. is good enough in design. Pan is first invoked as ruler in dark and moist woods; secondly, as the god to whom all natural products are sacred, with contrast of sunny places; thirdly, as king of fauns and satyrs; fourthly, for six lines as farm-god. But this last idea has been anticipated by interpolation in the previous section. Then the last part of the ode connects Pan with the secrets and power of Nature. The expression *But no more*, however interpreted, is unfortunate at the end of the ode. The diction throughout is rich and the imagery chosen well for the work that it has to do in the various aspects of the god's energy, the different objects being seized and shown in happy phrases full

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

of knowledge and feeling ; and though it might perhaps have been better if the second section had immediately preceded the last, rather than that the mysteries should follow close on the farm, there is no great fault to find. But yet the ode does not at first reading make an impression corresponding to these merits, nor has it won, like the others, a high reputation ; and this may be due partly to the vagueness of the personification, caused by the variety of attributes and objects, and partly to the versification, which, though generally easy and fluent, pauses, especially in the second division, too frequently in the mid-line, in the manner of tagging, and produces there something of the effect of a catalogue, very foreign to the repose and finish which we look for in a set ode.

Ode to
Sorrow.

Lastly, as to the *Ode to Sorrow* in the 4th book of *Endymion*, I regard this as one of the greatest of Keats' achievements, and agree with all that Mr. Sidney Colvin has said in its praise in his *Life of Keats*. It unfortunately halts in the opening, and the 1st and 4th stanzas especially are unequal to the rest, as is again the 3rd from the end, "Young stranger," which for its matter would with more propriety have been cast into the previous section ; and these impoverish the effect, and contain expressions which might put some readers off. If they would begin at the 5th stanza and omit the 3rd from the end, they would find little that is not admirable. And, as it stands, the ode is, I think, the better for these omissions. The pictorial description of the Bacchic procession is unmatched for life, wide motion, and romantic dreamy Orientalism, while the concluding stanzas, returning to the first movement, are as lovely as any Elizabethan lyric, and in the same manner. The bold contrast and passion of the ode, in spite of its weaker opening and the few expressions which remind one that it is an early work, give it a unique place among the richest creations of the English Muse.

VII. SONNETS.

Sonnets.

There are nearly sixty sonnets in the latest editions of Keats' poems, but the most of them are sonnets only in external form. The metrical laws and liberties of sonnet-writing have been much inflicted on readers, and sonnets are usually classified by their differences in these minor particulars. But a more useful classification would be by their contents and form of thought. The typical sonnet is a reflective poem on love, or at least in some mood of love or desire, or absorbing passion or emotion ; and such a definition includes almost everything which cannot be readily referred to some quite different species of poetry, as a few considerations may illustrate.

The Greek epigram, for instance, was originally, as the name implies, an inscription : its business was to record some

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

event or mark some place, and its excellence to raise an emotion in the reader's mind. Its qualities, terseness with pathos, soon established a form which poets used for other purposes, until in the hands of city wits the name wholly changed its signification, and often now the record is a piece of scandal, and the emotion such as may be expressed by a well-bred jeer; a sad fall from Simonides. The sonnet form has been as loosely and variously used as the epigram, and the many varieties of the two have more than one point of contact; but it is plain that an epigram proper cannot become a sonnet by mere expansion to fourteen lines;—this happens to exceed epigrammatic length, but is possible in dedications and temple inscriptions,—and such a hybrid may at least be separated off as an epigrammatic sonnet.

The Greek Epigram.

Again, Horace elaborated a form of ode which it is easier to recognise than in few words describe; and a number of Milton's sonnets may be referred to this ode form. If we compare, for example, his *Cyriack, whose grandsire*, with *Martii cælebs* or *Æli vetusto*, there can be no doubt that Milton was here deliberately using the sonnet form to do the work of Horace's tight stanzas; and not the whole of Shakespeare's or Petrarch's sonnets set alongside will show enough kinship with these sonnets of Milton to draw them away from their affinity with Horace. Such sonnets, too, as his addresses to Vane, Fairfax, and Cromwell are properly odes, and should be called odes, or at least odic sonnets.

Again, there is a class of poetry called "occasional verse," and such a poem as may be written on any trivial event or fancy cannot become a sonnet because it goes begging for a dress, and conscious not only of nakedness but of leanness, steals a well-cut garment for disguise.

These examples may suffice, if it be noted first, that nothing forbids a true sonnet from having an epigrammatic, or odic, or occasional motive—and this last is very common; and secondly, that all these forms and others are found mixed in the sonnet with its true subject-matter in all proportions.

Now not so many as half of Keats' sonnets can by any stretch of interpretation be called sonnets proper, if we consider their substance rather than their verse form. The greater number of them are occasional, reflective, or odic addresses or dedications, or poems on places and books. And these hybrids come thickest among the earlier poems, while the true sonnets predominate towards the end. Again, almost all the early sonnets are Italian in rhyme system, and all the later are Shakespearian; and if we pick out from them the twelve best poems, these will all be found to be true sonnets and eight of them on the Shakespearian model. Twelve is all that very high praise can be given to, and that number already encroaches on the second best; and if a next twelve be chosen, this would be

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

made up almost equally of true sonnets and hybrids. From which it seems that these hybrid poems of Keats', though most of them contain lines which makes us glad to possess and preserve them, are among his immature performances ; and also that as he improved in composition he relinquished his foreign subject-matter, and the Italian rhyme system, and did his best work in the English manner.

*Ten very fine
Sonnets.*

There are ten very fine sonnets ; they are—

“ Much have I travelled.”
“ When I have fears.”
“ Come hither all sweet maidens.”
“ Four seasons.”
“ Bright star.”
“ O soft embalmer.”
“ I cry your mercy.”
“ As Hermes once.”
“ The day is gone.”
“ Time's sea.”

And with these some might class for its easy and pleasant mastery—

“ To one who hath been long in city pent.”

And the sonnet “ Why did I laugh to-night ? ” has been selected and admired by some critics : it seems to me to be turgid and capricious, and hence unsuccessful. But all the first ten are extremely fine—the first eight being nearly faultless—and must stand among the best in the language. And if we pass from them to the next in merit, there is a great fall. Such a list would contain *Spenser a jealous honourer ; Many the wonders ; Nymph of the downward smile ; How many bards ; Small busy flames ; Keen fitful gusts ; My spirit is too weak ; Glory and loveliness*, and *The town the churchyard* ; and there is not one of these which does not plainly fail, and that sometimes badly, in some part, though all have their points of excellence.¹

Not to speak of the magnificence of the ten best sonnets (the 8th line of the first is below the mark ; the final couplet of No. 2 is weak ; and the 4th line of No. 9 requires much allowance, see p. ix), Keats' sonnets are generally distinguished by a total absence of the self-consciousness which is the common bane of sonnets, and has got them a bad name among honest folk ; so that many lovers of poetry put Keats' sonnets next to Shakespeare's. They are free from effort and puzzle-headedness and pedantry, and when they do fall, they do not fall stiffly but negligently, and most of them are pleasant poems and grateful to the reader.

¹ Matthew Arnold selected eight sonnets ; five are among the eight which I have set first : the other three are—*After dark vapours ; Great spirits now ; The poetry of the earth*.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

VIII. *EPISTLES*.

There are four *Epistles* written in ten-syllable couplets :-- Epistles.

1. To Geo. Felton Mathew (Nov. 1815).
2. To my brother George (Aug. 1816).
3. To Ch. Cowden Clarke (Sept. 1816).
4. To Reynolds (March 1818).

And with them may be grouped the two poems criticised on p. x., that is the short *Endymion* and *Sleep and Poetry*.

Though there are good things in these *Epistles*, their execution is in every respect very poor, and they are in so far more like letters written in rhyme than poems in the form of letters, and they may all be taken with the apology which Keats sent with the fourth, to "excuse the unconnected subject and careless verse." The *Epistle* to Cowden Clarke is altogether far the worst, and though it has a rational argument, it is not worth defending from any condemnation for want of artistic form; but it is in my opinion wrong to include the other early epistles and poems in this judgment. In my previous analysis of two of these, I have pointed out their really solid construction, and the 1st, 2nd and 4th of the *Epistles* are, I should say, quite as well built. Their "argument" is perfectly clear, and if the form of it escapes the reader's attention, that is due to the lightness of the imaginative touch and flight, which is a welcome escape from the conscious pedantries of form, and, so long as the sense is clear, a great merit. Indeed, if the expression of these *Epistles* were at all worthy of their framework, they would be models of what such epistles should be. Nos. 1 and 2 must be passed over here. No. 4 is of great interest. Its argument (though Keats himself calls the poem unconnected) is a very beautiful artistic movement of thought, just short of caprice, returning at the end with great force to the apparent first motive, which is suddenly revealed as being much weightier than at first allowed to appear. The heads are these:—Automatic capricious imaginations of all kinds, 1-12, very common; they may be beautiful, as a picture by Titian, described, -25; or like Claude's Enchanted Castle, described, -66. The wish that all our imaginings could take such colouring, etc., question why they cannot, -85. The poet shows himself haunted by a horrid mood, -end.

The passage l. 67 onwards is of importance with respect to Keats' method—

"O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
Would all their colours from the sunset take:
From something of *material sublime*," etc.

If this be compared with the passage which is contrasted with Wordsworth on p. xiii. there will be a mutual illustration of sense.

¹ And see again p. l.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Epistles.

Keats also here, in a confession of failure, analyses his inability to express his ideas—

“Imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confined,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven.”

Also in this poem he plainly states that he does not consider his mind matured, nor able to teach, and that he is a prey to the moods of pessimism, but that he will not give way to them. He longs rather for the time when he shall arrive at “the love of good and ill,” and speaks of it as his “award.”

IX. LYRICAL POEMS.

Seven-
syllable
couplets.

If we include among the lyrical poems those written in seven-syllable couplets, we find three popular pieces, *Souls of Poets*, *Bards of Passion*, and *Ever let the Fancy Roam*. In a letter to his brother, January 1819, Keats writes: “These are specimens of a sort of rondeau which I think I shall become partial to, because you have one idea amplified with greater ease and more delight and freedom than in the sonnet.” The theme is stated in the first four lines, and then, after an amplification without progress, these are used again in the last division to make a close by return, like a rondo in music; and the form seems good, simple and attractive. These three poems have all of them the popular qualities of fluency and grace, and the statement of the subject is provocative of interest; yet, though the first sustains itself in a fine vein for six lines, there is little other merit either of thought or diction in the first two. Mr. M. Arnold chose these and excluded the *Fancy* from his selection, but there can be no doubt that this last is by far the best of the three. It is maintained throughout at a fair level, and the simple descriptions of nature, recalling *L’Allegro*, are often very beautiful; and in the last division there is a sensuous passage done in the fine Miltonic manner, where the eight-syllable line is introduced with great effect, descriptively of Jove’s languor.

Of the five other poems in this measure there is none worthy of praise as a whole.

Lyrics in
stanzas.

There are left now only the lyrical poems in stanza, and easily first, holding a unique place in literature, stands *La belle dame sans merci*. This occurs in a long journalistic letter from Keats to his brother in America, and is dated “Wednesday evening,” that is, April 28, 1819. It seems as if he had composed it on that day, and written it down hastily from memory, so that he had to correct several mistakes afterwards; and, from the remarks appended to it, it looks as if he was at the time unaware of its great merit. It was not inserted in the

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Lamia volume, but first appeared through Leigh Hunt in the *La Belle Indicator* for May 10, 1820, and this version differs from that in Keats' letter in one or two points; and these may be corrections by Keats, but the original first line, which exists in Keats' own handwriting, must be kept. "*Wretched wight*," the unfortunate correction, is of the same kind, and appears to be of the same date as the corrections of *Hyperion*: it is cold and poor, and damaging to the tragic motive of the poem, and out of keeping with its heroic detail, whereas the original "*knight-at-arms*" gives the keynote of romance and of aloofness from real life, and the suggestion of armour is of the greatest value to the general colouring. It would be impertinence to praise this poem, which charms alike old and young: and it stands above the reach of criticism. For other reasons it is better not to criticise, "*In a drear-nighted December*," which, after a very long interval indeed, must be placed next. This poem, which must surely have been Thos. Hood's model, is a great favourite, and perhaps deservedly so, both for its beauty and originality, but the latter quality proves expensive. And after this poem there is another gap, for if we mention the next best lyrics, we come to such poems as *Meg Merrilies*, and *Where be you going, you Devon maid?* which, as Lord Houghton printed it, omitting the second stanza, is successful; and *I had a dove*, which could only have been written by a poet; and *Walking in Scotland*, of which the obscurity and strangeness of the sentiment described make it noteworthy. Mrs. Owen quotes the Faery song *Shed no tear!* as worthy of Keats, but we wonder how it was that there are not more better lyrics. Keats, one would have thought, would have excelled in them, and we can only suppose that we have his odes instead.

La Belle
Dame sans
Merci.

In a drear-
nighted
December.

Shed no
tear.

Success in lyrical verse requires a delicately strict subjection of imagination to one purpose, and this was not a part of Keats' poetic instinct; and though when he came to learn it, he wrote as it would seem almost unconsciously one of the best lyrics in the world; yet it is not improbable that he would still have regarded lyrics as a tract where he might cast off restraint. The fact remains that, with the exception of *La belle dame*, he never brought all his genius to "spend its fury in a song."

X. OTHO AND STEPHEN.

Otho the Great is contemporary with *Lamia*: it was written July-September 1819, and should therefore be among Keats' best work; but it is not, so that its failure must be specially accounted for: and it may, I think, be entirely laid to inexperience, and to the ugly and ill-shapen Elizabethan models to which Keats apparently looked in good faith for guidance; and among which, with their stagey fury, unnecessary confusions, rude manners, and occasional magnificences, his play might

Otho.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

*The plot of
Otho.*

pass undistinguished. Unfortunately too this play turns on a question of maiden virtue, which he could not handle, and which he did not even choose for himself, for the plot was furnished him by a friend, who gave him the scenes across the table to versify or dramatise one by one—a most deadening situation. It is badly contrived: the antecedent conditions are very elaborate, and yet are never plainly stated; they have to be discovered from isolated, ill-managed and confused hints in the dialogue; so that the attention of an auditor, if it was not entirely put off by this riddle, would only be kept alive by a wish to come to a judgment of his guesses. The riddle, moreover, has no satisfactory solution. Then the scenes themselves are rather lacking in distinct dramatic point, independently of the uncertainty of the motive. But if these faults are not wholly due to Keats, he must yet have the blame of the lack of moral import, and of the imperfect delineation of the characters, whose manners are not good, and who seem to take a conscious interest in the plot. The style has the faults of cold magnificence, occasional flatness and common expressions, with careless grammar, and the use of childish tricks for impromptu effect. In spite of all this, there is a succinctness and force about the whole, which forbid one to conclude that Keats would not have succeeded in drama: and though it is commonly said that he lacked the essential moral grasp, his letters seem to me to refute this, and his determination would have been sufficient assurance of success. In fact, the fragment of *Stephen*, which he began on his own lines after finishing *Otho*, already shows an advance. This is written in a style midway between Marlowe and Shakespeare, and recalls the opening of the third part of *Henry VI.* The imitated magnificence is somewhat restless, but the narrative and purpose of the characters stand out fairly well amid the stir and freedom which was evidently the poet's aim.

Stephen.

It would be easy to quote from *Otho* some fine passages, and many fine lines and expressions, but they seem to be buried in a rubbish-heap from which one gladly turns back to the green tangle of *Endymion*.

XI. DICTION AND RHYTHM.

Vocabulary.

Keats' vocabulary, to judge by the impression that one gets from reading his poems, is rich, and his use of quite a large number of words that are not commonly found must be reckoned among the factors of his style. Mr. W. Arnold¹ has made a special examination of these, and his remarks imply an objection to adjectives with the suffix *y*, like *bloomy* and *bowery*; but when these are formed from substantives they are regular enough. Adjectives thus formed from other adjectives—like

¹ Essay published with his edition of Keats' poems.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

paly, which should mean full of pales or palings,—are not on the same footing : to any one accustomed to Chaucer's verse they would sound more like old than new words, and they would be useful in versification, but they are also like baby-talk, and generally indefensible ; it does not appear, however, that Keats laid himself open to any reproach in this particular. *Paly* had been used by other writers ; and even with these words the test is their success, not their regularity. I never heard of anyone objecting to Shakespeare's

*Diction and
Rhythm.*

“I can call spirits from the *vasty* deep.”

Indeed, what is in question is very much the same with the words as with the spirits, whether they will come when you do call for them.

Among Keats' inventions *spangly* does not look promising ; but the passage in *Isabella*—

“As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil.
We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,
And see the *spangly* gloom froth up and boil,”

amply justifies the word, for which no other could be substituted : and it has been received into the language. So again the “*pipy* hemlock” in the Ode to Pan is admirable : on the other hand, “*boundly reverence*” defies interpretation ; but the general result of Mr. Arnold's examination is that most of the strange words in Keats were taken from earlier writers. Readers of the poems cannot miss noting these : they are less likely to observe the exact nature of the class of epithets which most frequently recur ; the chief group might, I think, be called languid, such as *quiet, sweet, fair, white, green, old, young, little*, and other such words as *tender, gentle, easy, fresh, pleasant*, most of these suggestive of comfort. Then the *melting, fainting, swimming, swooning*, and *panting* words are over frequent. Words like *wild, dark, deep, strange, lone, mysterious*, etc., have a great deal to do, but they are not worked so hard as by Shelley. Keats has also a pretty steady recurrence of certain objects ; he is as fond of *moss* and *eagles* as Shelley was, and *echoes, bees, marble, silver, dew, nests* and *weeds*,—and the list might be extended,—are too conspicuous. A great deal of the general insipidity and tedium of *Endymion* may be analysed down to this. The over-frequent use which he makes of *tiptoe*—taken from Shakespeare—is very characteristic of his manner. But he outgrew all this, and if in his early poems he uses these words too frequently, yet he has also used them as well as they can be used. Some faults of his pronunciation, which have been called Cockneyisms, cannot be passed so easily. Thus *perhaps*, used as a monosyllable, is abominable : but this occurs only in the early poems. And he renounces in *Lamia* his pronunciation of *toward*, which he had hitherto used as a

*Pronuncia-
tion.*

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

*Diction and
Rhythm.*

disyllable accented on the last, and comes round to the contracted pronunciation. This word, and words like *fire* and *lyre*, which he makes disyllables, often weaken his lines; for in disyllabic metres which admit elisions and trisyllabic feet, they will not readily, at least to my ear, sustain a whole foot of two syllables. Verse which allows such a line as this—

“ Ah desperate mortal ! I even dared to press ” (*End.* i. 661),

halts at the following—

“ And then, towards me, like a very maid ” (i. 634).

“ Dearest Endymion, my entire love ” (iii. 1022).

“ The lyre of his soul Æolian tuned ” (ii. 866).

But Keats also amended this later, though too late to destroy the effect of his example, and used these syllables¹ in *Hyperion* as Milton would have done—

“ Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side ” (iii. 63).

Of the same kind is the exaggerated value which he gives to the semivowel *l*, in the following lines for example—

“ The dazz-l-ing sunrise ; two sisters sweet,
Turn’d syllab-l-ing thus : Ah, Lycius bright.”

He also, like Shelley, makes a trisyllable of *evening*.

There is another peculiarity common to Keats and Shelley, which should be noticed because it introduces an instability into Keats’ rhythms. It is found in earlier writers, for instance, in this line from Shakespeare—

“ Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer,”

where the accent of the last foot is not inverted, but the compound *torch-bearer*, which we pronounce with a stress both on the first and second syllables, carries no stress at all on the second, but perhaps a slight compensating stress or delay on the last. There are a great many words made in this way of a monosyllable and a disyllable, in which we now observe both the colliding accents; and if these words occur in disyllabic rhythms of alternate stress, with their first syllable in the regular stressed place, then the next foot will to our ears, trained as they have been by Milton, have its stress inverted. I think that this is not always intended by Keats: here are examples—

“ A shów-monstèr about the streets of Prague.”

“ That cámp mushroom, dishonour of our house.”

“ Of béan-blossòms in heaven freshly shed.”

“ Or they might watch the quáit-pitchèrs, intent.”

“ Of lóve-spanglès just off yon cape of trees.”

“ The poor folk of the sea-country I blest.”

¹ Lyre is an unfortunate word to extend unduly. I have seen the following verse as motto for a song-book—

“ The lyre’s voice is lovely everywhere.”

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

"Then came a conquering eårth-thundèr and rumbled.
"All deàth-shaddòws, and glooms that overcast."
"Make not your rosary of yéw-berriès."

*Diction and
Rhythm.*

And the pronunciation in the following lines is probably caused by the same dislike of colliding accents in a compounded trisyllable—

"Look'd up ; a cónflicting of shame and ruth."
"And strives in vain to únsettle and wield."

And thus no doubt—

"In a dreár-nightèd December."

We now read this line (as we do most of the others) with our changed accent, and we rather like the irregularity thus introduced into the verse. There is, in fact, one line of Shelley which is particularly admired for a very beautiful rhythm, which he probably did not intend—

"And wild-roses and ivy serpentine,"

where Shelley, I should suppose, stressed *wild-roses* like *primroses* : in the same poem is

"There grew pied windflowers and violets."

And he has

"Swéet-basil and mignonétte."

Bride-maidèns, quíck-silkèr, bírd-footèd, traín-bearèr, etc., and in the *Recollection* are *pínc-forèst*, and *wóod-peckèr*, where the beautiful versification has, at least to my ear, a charm added to it by the extra licence which our pronunciation introduces.

Whether these poets took this accent from the Elizabethans, or whether it really had lingered on, I do not know : in later poets it seems only an affectation ; but it is a real source of uncertainty in Keats' verse, because he not only used the other pronunciation also, but he allowed the rhythmical inversions which that would introduce into the verses where it was apparently not intended.

And for this reason it would not do to decide this question *Rhythm.* merely on the assumption that Keats could not have intended the inversion of stress. He begins one sonnet with the line—

"How many bards gild the lapses of time,"

where the inversion of the third and fourth stresses is very musical and suitable to the exclamatory form of the sentence. Again, in *End. i.*—

"Young companies nimbly began dancing."

The inversion of the third and fifth stresses admirably pictures the dancers stepping on the scene : and such rhythms as

"Visions of all places ; a bowery nook,"

show what a broad view he took of rhythm, and how melo-
xliii

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Rhythm.

diously his verse carries variety. And he was fond of inversion even of the fifth foot, *e.g.*—

“Guarding his forehead with her round elbow.”
“Was in his plaited brow ; yet his eyelids.”
“Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet.”
“Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,” etc.

And if these might be regarded as merely a grace snatched from the remembered cadences of old romance, yet he also uses this inversion deliberately with its full proper force, as for the irony of impossibility in

“Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art,”

and in the following, where the strong enclitic accent has almost the effect of terror (see p. xxv.)—

“Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not.”

In one place at least in *Endymion* an inverted fifth foot is made to rhyme to a line with an extra-metrical syllable at the end of it : an uncomfortable effect common in Wyatt and writers of the time of Henry VIII. And in another place a rhythmical effect is sought by using Chaucer's licence of omitting the first syllable of the line ; for there is evidence that Keats intended this (Letter xxxix.)—

“And the dull twanging bow-string, and the raft
Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top.”

As there is not space in this essay to treat this subject thoroughly, I have chosen these few points as being of importance to the reader. I may conclude by saying generally that Keats' rhythm, in spite of its variety, is easy and fluent rather than restless or powerful.

XII. GENERAL

Imaginative phrases.

In these detached criticisms many of the main qualities of Keats' poetry have been incidentally brought out ; there is one, as yet unmentioned, which claims the first place in a general description, and that is the very seal of his poetic birthright, the highest gift of all in poetry, that which sets poetry above the other arts ; I mean the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of language on one point, so that a single and apparently effortless expression rejoices the æsthetic imagination at the moment when it is most expectant and exacting, and at the same time astonishes the intellect with a new aspect of truth. This is only found in the greatest poets, and is rare in them ; and it is no doubt for the possession of this power that Keats has been often likened to Shakespeare, and very justly, for Shakespeare is of all poets the greatest master of it ; the difference between them here is that Keats'

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

intellect does not supply the second factor in the proportion or degree that Shakespeare does ; indeed, it is chiefly when he is dealing with material and sensuous subjects that his poems afford illustrations ; but these are, as far as they go, not only like Shakespeare, but often as good as Shakespeare when he happens to be confining himself to the same limited field. Examples from Shakespeare are such well-known sayings as these—

“ My way of life
Is faln into the sear, the yellow leaf.”—*Macbeth*.

“ Lay not that flattering unction to your soul.”—*Hamlet*.

“ We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.”—*Tempest*.

Examples from Keats are—

“ The journey homeward to habitual self.”

“ Solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven.”

“ My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams.”

In most of Keats' phrases of this sort there is a quality which makes them unlike Shakespeare ; and if we should put into one group all those which are absolutely satisfactory, and then make a second group of those which are not so simply convincing, we should find in these last that the un-Shakespearian quality was more declared, and came out as something fanciful, or rather too vaguely or venturesomely suggestive ; the whole phrase displaying its poetry rather than its meaning, and being in consequence less apt and masterly. This second group would contain many of the most admired lines of Keats, and these are very characteristic of him. Such are—

“ Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks,”

and—

“ How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.”

The *Revision of Hyperion* shows that Keats himself was dissatisfied with his *senators* ; and one can see the reason without condemning the passage or approving its omission. Finally, there would be left a third group of such-like phrases which plainly miss the mark.

Closely allied to these imaginative phrases, and perhaps more characteristic of Keats and peculiar to him, are the short vivid pictures which may be called his masterpieces of word-painting, in which with a few words he contrives completely to finish a picture which is often of vast size. Good examples of this are the sestet of the *Leander* sonnet ; the last four lines of the *Chapman's Homer* ; the passage beginning *Golden his hair* in *Hyperion* ii. 371 ; and, to quote one from *Endymion*—

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

"The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze,
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks."

For its wealth in such rare strokes of descriptive imagination Keats' poetry must always take the very first rank; and it is his imaginative quality of phrase which sets him more than any other poet of his time in creative antagonism to the eighteenth-century writers; for it was not only foreign to their style, but incomprehensible and repugnant to their pseudo-classic taste, which preferred a "reasonable propriety of thought," such as Hume found to be lacking in Shakespeare, to the shadowy powers of imagination, however sublime.

*Relation to
Nature.*

The limitation that we found of Keats' faculty when compared with Shakespeare—which, if it may be ascribed wholly to his youth, amply justifies the sentiment of the opening lines of this essay—leads us on naturally to another of his chief characteristics, and that is his close relationship with common Nature: he is for ever drawing his imagery from common things, which are for the first time represented as beautiful; and again in this we see his opposition to the eighteenth-century writers, who mainly contented themselves with conventional common-places for their natural imagery; whereas Keats discovers in the most usual objects either beauty or sources of delight or comfort, or sometimes even of imaginative horror, which are all new; and here his originality seems inexhaustible, and his wide poetic sympathies the strongest. Nor does he confine himself to matters of which he could have had much experience; he makes Nature the object of his imaginative faculty—Nature apart from man, or related to man as an enchantress to a dreamer. This is, I suppose, what he means when, comparing himself with Byron, he says, "There is this great difference between us: he describes what he sees,—I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task: now see the immense difference."¹ Here he shows a vast wealth which makes his poems a mine of pleasure. *Endymion* is crowded to excess with a variety of these images, and as they came up in his mind in an endless stream to illustrate his ideas, the ideas sometimes fare rather badly; for though they were no doubt generally held firm in his own mind, they are yet drowned by the images of their objective presentation; until these themselves at last lose even their own virtue, and fatigue the reader, who feels like a sightseer in a gallery overcrowded with pictures, which by degrees he ceases to regard with attention.

Passion.

And in this devotion to natural beauty lies, I believe, one true reason of Keats' failure in the delineation of human passion. The only passion delineated by Keats is the imaginative love of Nature, and human love is regarded by him as a part of this, and his lover is happy merely because admitted into communion

¹ Letters, cxvi, p. 301.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

with new forms of natural beauty. This, which appeared in theory in the explanation of the allegory of *Endymion* (p. v), is practically exposed in the 2nd stanza of the *Ode to Melancholy*, where, among the objects on which a sensitive mind is recommended to indulge its melancholy fit, the anger of his mistress is enumerated with roses, peonies, and rainbows, as a beautiful phenomenon, plainly without respect to its cause, meaning or effect. And so in *Lamia*—

“He took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new,”

and

“Fine was the mitigated fury.”

How different is the parallel passage of Shakespeare, which at once occurs to one—

“O, what a deal of scorn looks beautiful
In the contempt and anger of his lip!”

This is not artistic admiration, but a lover's entire devotion.

In the criticism of *Endymion* we found a want of taste in Keats' idea of woman; we have now to add a charge of lack of true insight into human passion. If this was wholly due to the absence of awakening experience, it is at least unfortunate that in *Lamia*, in which from its date we might have expected something mature, he should have chosen so low a type. Though perhaps suggested by the original of his story, it was not necessary to it; and even if he preferred to have his snake-woman bad, there was every reason why Lycius' passion should have been of a higher type. How unworthy it is is shown in the description of their meeting and in the following sentiment—

“But too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.”

This love is an association for mutual pleasure, the end of which is satiety and revulsion, and it is, I repeat, at least unfortunate that Keats, after he had known love, should, in his first attempt to delineate it, have been satisfied with so vulgar a type. The ideal passion in *Isabella* is insipid, and even in *The Eve of St. Agnes* the passion, as expressed in stanzas xxxv.-xxxix., is at best of a conventional type, and has to have a good deal read into it by the light of the story.

But Keats' doctrine of beauty, which might be defended if it was spiritualised, which it never is by him, may often be reconciled with true feeling by the allowance which is due to his objective method; concerning this, as illustrations have been given (see pp. xiii, xiv), I shall say no more here except to repeat that Keats' imagery probably always followed, if it did

*Doctrine of
Beauty.*

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

not always clearly picture, some train of ideas ; and when he says in the Ode *To Fanny*

“ My muse had wings,
And ever ready was to take her course
Whither I bent her force,
Unintellectual, yet divine to me ;—
Divine, I say ! What sea-bird o’er the sea
Is a philosopher the while he goes
Winging along where the great water throes ? ”

*Intellectual
element.*

these words should not be taken as a disavowal of meaning in “ those abstractions which were his only life,” but as an apology for immaturity, and they must be interpreted in the light of his high idea of philosophy. Keats was conscious, like Virgil, of a double inclination. He said of himself, April 1818 : “ I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious, and a love for philosophy. Were I calculated for the former, I should be glad ; but as I am not, I shall turn all my soul to the latter.” This would be a strange variant of

“ Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musæ.”

if we need suppose it to be anything more than an utterance of that contrarious mood so common to introspection ; it is nevertheless evidence that Keats was unlikely to have depreciated the intellectual element of his art : but the intellectual element is always in league with emotion, and would have been, I imagine, considered by him as worthless in poetry without such mixture. In the *Epistle to Reynolds*, analysed on p. xxxvi, even the unpleasantness of the consideration of what we call the struggle for existence would, simply presented, have been flat and commonplace ; but he shows it as a “ horrid mood,” by which he is haunted, and uses great skill and a wealth of contrasted beauty in introducing it under this enhanced aspect, “ wreathing a flowery band spite of the unhealthy ways made for his searching ; ” and in calling his Muse unintellectual, he was no doubt uttering his reiterated impatience for more knowledge, the expression of which recurs so often in his poems and letters, that it is needless to quote any one, and which rises to a sort of consummation in the *Revision of Hyperion*, where it seems as if he had imagined himself to have at length attained to an insight of the mystery.

Earnestness.

There is less opposition, it seems to me, between Keats’ true instinct for ideal philosophy and his luxurious poetry (which seems rather its young expression), than between these on the one hand and his practical human qualities, as revealed by his letters, on the other. The bond of all was an unbroken and unflagging earnestness, which is so utterly unconscious and unobservant of itself as to be almost unmatched. It is always present in his poetry both for good and ill, in the

¹ Letters, l.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

spontaneous and felt quality of his epithets, and the absence of any barrier even, it would sometimes seem, of consideration or judgment between his mind and his pen. Whether this earnestness is the account of his failure in his purely comic freaks I do not know, but it seems to have been incompatible with humour, for which, in spite of some traces in his letters, it does not appear to have left any room. The best of the letters are serious and full of good matter, a few are quite foolish, and a great number are written in a high-spirited jocular vein, which seems to be carelessly assumed for the double purpose of amusing his correspondent and relaxing his own mind. The chief charm in all of them is their unalloyed sincerity: there is nothing between the pen and the mind, not always even an effort or desire to write what should be worth reading: it is enough that it is he that writes, and his brother or friend that will read. *Lack of humour.*

In spite of this earnestness and philosophy, it is certainly true that Keats' mind was of a luxurious habit; and it must have been partly due to this temperament that he showed so little severity towards himself in the castigation of his poems, though that was, as I said before, chiefly caused by the prolific activity of his imagination, which was always providing him with fresh material to work on. In this respect he is above all poets an example of what is meant by inspiration: the mood which all artists require, covet, and find most rare was the common mood with him; and I should say that being amply supplied with this, what as an artist he most lacked was self-restraint and self-castigation,—which was indeed foreign to his luxurious temperament, unselfish and devoted to his art as he was,—the presence of which was most needful to watch, choose, and reject the images which crowded on him as he thought or wrote. *Luxurious habit.* *Inspiration.*

And it is thus that Keats' best period was when he fell under the influence and example of Milton. He was a great deal influenced by other poets, and would reproduce not only the style of any writer whom he imitated, but the mental attitude which informed the style.¹ But it was not until he came to rival Milton's epic that his originality seemed to be in danger; and no one would think of judging *Hyperion* by its likeness to *Paradise Lost*. If the two poems should be generally compared, though it is plain that Keats does not reach the sustained sonority and force of Milton (nor has he even shown as much skill in characterising his divinities, whose elemental personalities would seem to have offered him a more interesting and poetically rich opportunity than the biblical devils did to Milton), yet in one respect he is in my opinion superior to Milton, for his descriptive touches are more sympathetic and less con-

¹ This is not true of his earliest work. But see, for example, the sonnet *Time's Sea*, which might have been written by Shakespeare.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

ventional. To give an example, where he describes Asia, he has

“ More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory.”

In my first edition I said that Milton would not have put in this epithet *dusky*. It happens that in *Paradise Regained* (iv. 76), where Milton is describing the

“ Embassies from Regions far remote
In various habits on the Appian road,
Or on th' Æmilian,”

he uses this very word of the Indians,

“ Dusk faces with white silken Turbants wreath'd,”

and this, while it corrects my faulty analysis, well exhibits the difference which I wished to explain. In Milton *dusk* is the primary external distinction used as a sufficient description ; in Keats *dusky* is secondary, and added on to the emotional expression of the face, and from that it takes a sympathetic warmth which is wholly absent in Milton.

So fragmentary and incomplete a treatise may break off abruptly. I began it with a due sense, as I thought, of responsibility, and with full admiration for the poet : I find both increased at the end. I owe much to the kindness of friends, who have read my papers and offered suggestions ; especially I may name Mrs. Margaret L. Woods, and my old friend Canon Dixon, whose remarks were of great service to me ; but most of all I have to thank Mr. Ellis Wooldridge, without the promise of whose collaboration I should not have ventured on my task. In the qualitative analysis there is as much of his work as of my own, and I could not put my name to it without this acknowledgment.

If my criticism should seem sometimes harsh, that is, I believe, due to its being given in plain terms, a manner which I prefer, because by obliging the writer to say definitely what he means, it makes his mistakes easy to point out, and in this way the true business of criticism may be advanced ; nor do I know that, in work of this sort, criticism has any better function than to discriminate between the faults and merits of the best art : for it commonly happens, when any great artist comes to be generally admired, that his faults, being graced by his excellences, are confounded with them in the popular judgment, and being easy of imitation, are the points of his work which are most liable to be copied. Keats has had some such imitators, and would, I imagine, have been glad to be justified from them. And if I have read him rightly, he would be pleased, could he see it, at the universal recognition of his genius, and the utter rout of its traducers ; but much more

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

moved, stirred he would be to the depth of his great nature to know that he was understood, and that for the nobility of his character his name was loved and esteemed.

P.S.—The statement in the text that Keats began *Hyperion* in November 1818, and worked at it as late as April 1819, finally discarding it in September 1819, is, I think, probable; but I do not wish it to be taken for more than an opinion. I have not attempted to settle doubtful details of chronology, and do not wish to appear to have done so.

YATTENDON, 1894.

I have now, after twenty years, revised my Essay, correcting misprints, and some of my own mistakes, and I have tried to amend the faultiest passages. I wish to thank the critics for their generous reception of my work, and for their valuable animadversions.

CHILSWELL, 1914.

P.S.—December 1915.

Delay in publication gives me an opportunity of adding to my criticism of the *Ode to Melancholy*, p. xxx, where it is said that this Ode does not hit so hard as its great beauty would lead one to expect. A friend supplies me with a reason, which illustrates so well the importance of little matters in great style that it will reward examination: it is this. The last stanza of the Ode begins with the pronoun "She": this pronoun obviously refers to Melancholy, and according to the sequence of the grammar it inevitably takes "Thy mistress" of three lines before for its noun; whence it would follow that the mistress is Melancholy: and my friend, who had always made this identification, defended it to me as giving the only worthy signification of the poem.

If this identification be not allowed, then "she" has to be explained as a defect in the grammar, and to be excused on the supposition that Keats imagined the pronoun to be satisfied by the general representation of Melancholy, even perhaps by the name in the title, and by the occurrence of the word as an adjective in the first line of stanza 2, and by the licensed anticipation of its noun six lines below. This I hold to be the true solution, and I suppose that the Ode is generally read in this way. The reader overlooks the grammatical situation just as the poet did, and the confidence of his common sense really gives the measure of the difficulties that oppose the identification implied by the grammar, which are insuperable to a clear imagination, because the *angry raving mistress* (and note that the anger is not divine wrath, but human temper) cannot be brought alongside *the vested goddess in her sovran shrine with cloudy trophies hung*. It is well to note other points which the grammatical interpretation exposes. If Melancholy were the poet's mistress, then the Ode must be in a manner addressed to himself; and this calls attention to pronouns *your* in stanza 1 and *thy* in stanza 2. It is seen, too, that *when the melancholy fit shall fall* is not quite worthy, and that the word melancholy should not have been used thus as an adjective. The line just quoted is alone sufficient to forbid the identification of Melancholy with the poet's mistress: the explanation given on page xlviii seems to me to be sound.

R. B.

NARRATIVE POEMS

ENDYMION

A POETIC ROMANCE

"The Stretched Metre of an Antique Song"

INSCRIBED

TO THE MEMORY

OF

THOMAS CHATTERTON

PREFACE

KNOWING within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;—it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell.

TEIGNMOUTH, April 10, 1818.

BOOK I

THING of beauty is a joy for ever :
Its loveliness increases ; it will never
Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet
breathing.

Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching : yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in ; and clear
rills

That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season ; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms :
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read :
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour ; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They alway must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.

JOHN KEATS

The very music of the name has gone
 Into my being, and each pleasant scene
 Is growing fresh before me as the green
 Of our own valleys : so I will begin
 Now while I cannot hear the city's din ;
 Now while the early budders are just new,
 And run in mazes of the youngest hue
 About old forests ; while the willow trails
 Its delicate amber ; and the dairy pails
 Bring home increase of milk. And, as the
 year

Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
 My little boat, for many quiet hours,
 With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
 Many and many a verse I hope to write,
 Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
 Hide in deep herbage ; and ere yet the bees
 Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
 I must be near the middle of my story.
 O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
 See it half finished : but let Autumn bold,
 With universal tinge of sober gold,
 Be all about me when I make an end.
 And now at once, adventuresome, I send
 My herald thought into a wilderness :
 There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
 My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
 Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
 A mighty forest ; for the moist earth fed
 So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
 Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.
 And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
 Where no man went ; and if from shepherd's
 keep

A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens,
 Never again saw he the happy pens
 Whither his brethren, bleating with content,
 Over the hills at every nightfall went.
 Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever,
 That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever
 From the white flock, but pass'd unworried
 By angry wolf, or pard with prying head,
 Until it came to some unfooted plains
 Where fed the herds of Pan : ay great his gains
 Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were
 many,

Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,

And ivy banks ; all leading pleasantly
 To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
 Stems thronging all around between the swell
 Of turf and slanting branches : who could tell
 The freshness of the space of heaven above,
 Edg'd round with dark tree-tops ? through
 which a dove
 Would often beat its wings, and often too
 A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
 There stood a marble altar, with a tress
 Of flowers budded newly ; and the dew
 Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
 Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,
 And so the dawned light in pomp receive.
 For 'twas the morn : Apollo's upward fire
 Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
 Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
 A melancholy spirit well might win
 Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
 Into the winds : rain-scented eglantine
 Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun ;
 The lark was lost in him ; cold springs had run
 To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass ;
 Man's voice was on the mountains ; and the mass
 Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,
 To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn
 Were busiest, into that self-same lawn
 All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped
 A troop of little children garlanded ;
 Who gathering round the altar, seemed to pry
 Earnestly round as wishing to espy
 Some folk of holiday : nor had they waited
 For many moments, ere their cars were sated
 With a faint breath of music, which ev'n then
 Fill'd out its voice, and died away again.
 Within a little space again it gave
 Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,
 To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes
 breaking
 Through copse-clad vallies,—ere their death,
 o'ertaking
 The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.

And now, as deep into the wood as we
 Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light

ENDYMION

Fair faces and a rush of garments white,
Plainer and plainer shewing, till at last
Into the widest alley they all past,
Making directly for the woodland altar.
O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue falter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety, and of their glee:
But let a portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unmew
My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced
- along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd song;
Each having a white wicker over brimm'd
With April's tender younglings: next, well
trimm'd,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books;
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly:
Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the
ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
A venerable priest full soberly,
Begirt with ministring looks: always his eye
Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-
white,
Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull:
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd
Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car,
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown:

Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown:
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, halt
bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd,
To common lookers on, like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian:
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands: then would they
sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,
Of logs piled solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day,
Why should our young Endymion pine away!

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was
chang'd
To sudden veneration: women meek
Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each
cheek
Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.
Endymion too, without a forest peer,
Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he: "Men of Latmos! shepherd
bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From vallies where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air
stirs
Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds
forlorn
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn:
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air;

JOHN KEATS

And all ye gentle girls who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
Will put choice honey for a favoured youth :
Yea, every one attend ! for in good truth
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms ? Are not our wide
 plains
Speckled with countless fleeces ? Have not
 rains
Green'd over April's lap ? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes ; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
The earth is glad : the merry lark has pour'd
His early song against yon breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire ;
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
With wine, in honor of the shepherd-god.
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang :

"O THOU, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness ;
Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels
 darken ;
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and
 hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth ;
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow !
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan !

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet,
 turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide

Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms : O thou, to whom
Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow girted bees
Their golden honeycombs ; our village leas
Their fairest blossom'd beans and popped corn ;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee ; low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness ; pent up butterflies
Their freckled wings ; yea, the fresh budding
 year

All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine !

"Thou, to whom every fawn and satyr flies
For willing service ; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit ;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewildered shepherds to their path again ;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping ;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr king !

"O Hearer to the loud clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsmen : Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms :
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors :
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows !

"Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge

ENDYMION

Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
 Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
 That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
 Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
 Be still a symbol of immensity;
 A firmament reflected in a sea;
 An element filling the space between;
 An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
 With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
 And giving out a shout most heaven rending,
 Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan,
 Upon thy Mount Lycean!"

Even while they brought the burden to a close,
 A shout from the whole multitude arose,
 That lingered in the air like dying rolls
 Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
 Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
 Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
 Young companies nimbly began dancing
 To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.
 Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly
 To tunes forgotten—out of memory:
 Fair creatures! whose young children's children
 bred

Thermopylæ its heroes—not yet dead,
 But in old marbles ever beautiful.
 High genitors, unconscious did they cull
 Time's sweet first-fruits—they danc'd to weariness,

And then in quiet circles did they press
 The hillock turf, and caught the latter end
 Of some strange history, potent to send
 A young mind from its bodily tenement.
 Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent
 On either side; pitying the sad death
 Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath
 Of Zephyr slew him,—Zephyr penitent,
 Who now, ere Phœbus mounts the firmament,
 Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.
 The archers too, upon a wider plain,
 Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft,
 And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft
 Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,
 Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope
 Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling
 knee

And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,
 Poor, lonely Niobe! when her lovely young

Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue
 Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,
 And very, very deadliness did nip
 Her motherly cheeks. Arous'd from this sad
 mood

By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd,
 Uplifting his strong bow into the air,
 Many might after brighter visions stare:
 After the Argonauts, in blind amaze
 Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,
 Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,
 There shot a golden splendour far and wide,
 Spangling those million poutings of the brine
 With quivering ore: 'twas even an awful shine
 From the exaltation of Apollo's bow;
 A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.
 Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,
 Might turn their steps towards the sober ring
 Where sat Endymion and the aged priest
 'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks
 increas'd

The silvery setting of their mortal star.
 There they discours'd upon the fragile bar
 That keeps us from our homes ethereal;
 And what our duties there: to nightly call
 Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather;
 To summon all the downiest clouds together
 For the sun's purple couch; to emulate
 In ministring the potent rule of fate
 With speed of fire-tailed exhalations;
 To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons
 Sweet poesy by moonlight: besides these,
 A world of other unguess'd offices.
 Anon they wander'd, by divine converse,
 Into Elysium; vying to rehearse
 Each one his own anticipated bliss.
 One felt heart-certain that he could not miss
 His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd
 boughs,

Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows
 Her lips with music for the welcoming.
 Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring,
 To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,
 Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales:
 Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth
 wind,

And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind;
 And, ever after, through those regions be
 His messenger, his little Mercury.

JOHN KEATS

Some were athirst in soul to see again
 Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide champaign
 In times long past; to sit with them, and talk
 Of all the chances in their earthly walk;
 Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores
 Of happiness, to when upon the moors,
 Benighted, close they huddled from the cold,
 And shar'd their famish'd scrips. Thus all
 out-told

Their fond imaginations,—saving him
 Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,
 Endymion: yet hourly had he striven
 To hide the cankering venom, that had riven
 His fainting recollections. Now indeed
 His senses had swoon'd off: he did not heed
 The sudden silence, or the whispers low,
 Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,
 Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
 Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms:
 But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
 Like one who on the earth had never slept.
 Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man,
 Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close?
 Peona, his sweet sister: of all those,
 His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she
 made,

And breath'd a sister's sorrow to persuade
 A yielding up, a cradling on her care.
 Her eloquence did breathe away the curse:
 She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse
 Of happy changes in emphatic dreams,
 Along a path between two little streams,—
 Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow,
 From low-grown branches, and his footsteps slow
 From stumbling over stumps and hillocks small;
 Until they came to where these streamlets fall,
 With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush,
 Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush
 With crystal mocking of the trees and sky.
 A little shallop, floating there hard by,
 Pointed its beak over the fringed bank;
 And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank,
 And dipt again, with the young couple's
 weight,—

Peona guiding, through the water straight,
 Towards a bowery island opposite;
 Which gaining presently, she steered light

Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove,
 Where nested was an arbour, overwove
 By many a summer's silent fingering;
 To whose cool bosom she was used to bring
 Her playmates, with their needle broidery,
 And minstrel memories of times gone by.

So she was gently glad to see him laid
 Under her favourite bower's quiet shade,
 On her own couch, new made of flower leaves,
 Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves
 When last the sun his autumn tresses shook,
 And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took.
 Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest:
 But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest
 Peona's busy hand against his lips,
 And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips
 In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps
 A patient watch over the stream that creeps
 Windingly by it, so the quiet maid
 Held her in peace: so that a whispering blade
 Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling
 Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling
 Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be
 heard.

O magic sleep! O comfortable bird,
 That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
 Till it is hush'd and smooth! O unconfin'd
 Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key
 To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
 Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled
 caves,

Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves
 And moonlight; aye, to all the mazy world
 Of silvery enchantment!—who, upfurl'd
 Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,
 But renovates and lives?—Thus, in the bower,
 Endymion was calm'd to life again.
 Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,
 He said: "I feel this thine endearing love
 All through my bosom: thou art as a dove
 Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings
 About me; and the pearliest dew not brings
 Such morning incense from the fields of May,
 As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
 From those kind eyes,—the very home and
 haunt

Of sisterly affection. Can I want

ENDYMION

Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such
tears?

Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears
That, any longer, I will pass my days
Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise
My voice upon the mountain-heights; once
more
Make my horn parley from their foreheads
hoar;
Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall
loll

Around the breathed boar: again I'll poll
The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow:
And, when the pleasant sun is getting low,
Again I'll linger in a sloping mead
To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed
Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered sweet,
And, if thy lute is here, softly intreat
My soul to keep in its resolved course."

Hereat Peona, in their silver source,
Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim,
And took a lute, from which there pulsing came
A lively prelude, fashioning the way
In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay
More subtle cadenced, more forest wild
Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child;
And nothing since has floated in the air
So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare
Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand;
For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd
The quick invisible strings, even though she
saw

Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw
Before the deep intoxication.
But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon
Her self-possession—swung the lute aside,
And earnestly said: "Brother, 'tis vain to hide
That thou dost know of things mysterious,
Immortal, starry; such alone could thus
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in
aught

Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught
A Paphian dove upon a message sent?
Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent
Sacred to Dian? Haply, thou hast seen
Her naked limbs among the alders green;
And that, alas! is death. No I can trace
Something more high perplexing in thy face!"

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her
hand,

And said, "Art thou so pale, who wast so
bland

And merry in our meadows? How is this?
Tell me thine ailment: tell me all amiss!—
Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change
Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more
strange?

Or more complete to overwhelm surmise?
Ambition is no sluggard: 'tis no prize,
That toiling years would put within my grasp,
That I have sigh'd for: with so deadly gasp
No man e'er panted for a mortal love.
So all have set my heavier grief above
These things which happen. Rightly have they
done:

I, who still saw the horizontal sun
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the
world,

Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd
My spear aloft, as signal for the chace—
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race
With my own steed from Araby: pluck down
A vulture from his towery perching, frown
A lion into growling, loth retire—
To lose, at once, all my toil breeding fire,
And sink thus low! but I will ease my breast
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

"This river does not see the naked sky,
Till it begins to progress silverly
Around the western border of the wood,
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon:
And in that nook, the very pride of June,
Had I been used to pass my weary eyes;
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves
So dear a picture of his sovereign power,
And I could witness his most kindly hour,
When he doth tighten up the golden reins,
And paces leisurely down amber plains
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,
There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed
Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red:
At which I wondered greatly, knowing well
That but one night had wrought this flowery
spell;

JOHN KEATS

And, sitting down close by, began to muse
 What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I,
 Morpheus,
 In passing here, his owlet pinions shook ;
 Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook
 Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,
 Had dipt his rod in it : such garland wealth
 Came not by common growth. Thus on I
 thought,
 Until my head was dizzy and distraught.
 Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
 A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul ;
 And shaping visions all about my sight
 Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light ;
 The which became more strange, and strange,
 and dim,
 And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim :
 And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell
 The enchantment that afterwards befel ?
 Yet it was but a dream : yet such a dream
 That never tongue, although it overteem
 With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,
 Could figure out and to conception bring
 All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay
 Watching the zenith, where the milky way
 Among the stars in virgin splendour pours ;
 And travelling my eye, until the doors
 Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,
 I became loth and fearful to alight
 From such high soaring by a downward glance :
 So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,
 Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
 When, presently, the stars began to glide,
 And faint away, before my eager view :
 At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,
 And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge :
 And lo ! from opening clouds, I saw emerge
 The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er
 A shell for Neptune's goblet : she did soar
 So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
 Commingling with her argent spheres did roll
 Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
 At last into a dark and vapoury tent—
 Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train
 Of planets all were in the blue again.
 To commune with those orbs, once more I rais'd
 My sight right upward : but it was quite dazed
 By a bright something, sailing down apace,
 Making me quickly veil my eyes and face :

Again I look'd, and, O ye deities,
 Who from Olympus watch our destinies !
 Whence that completed form of all com-
 pleteness ?
 Whence came that high perfection of all sweet-
 ness ?
 Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O
 where
 Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair ?
 Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun ;
 Not—thy soft hand, fair sister ! let me shun
 Such follying before thee—yet she had,
 Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad ;
 And they were simply gordian'd up and braided,
 Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded,
 Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orb'd
 brow ;
 The which were blended in, I know not how,
 With such a paradise of lips and eyes,
 Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest
 sighs,
 That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings
 And plays about its fancy, till the stings
 Of human neighbourhood envenom all.
 Unto what awful power shall I call ?
 To what high fane ?—Ah ! see her hovering feet,
 More bluely vein'd, more soft, more whitely
 sweet
 Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose
 From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows
 Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion ;
 'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
 Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
 Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
 Handfuls of daisies." — " Endymion, how
 strange !
 Dream with in dream ! " — " She took an airy range,
 And then, towards me, like a very maid,
 Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid,
 And press'd me by the hand : Ah ! 'twas too
 much ;
 Methought I fainted at the charmed touch,
 Yet held my recollection, even as one
 Who dives three fathoms where the waters run
 Gurgling in beds of coral : for anon,
 I felt upmounted in that region
 Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,
 And eagles struggle with the buffeting north
 That balances the heavy meteor-stone ;—

ENDYMION

Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone,
But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky.
Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high,
And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd ;
Such as ay muster where grey time has scoop'd
Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side :
There hollow sounds arous'd me, and I sigh'd
To faint once more by looking on my bliss—
I was distracted ; madly did I kiss
The wooing arms which held me, and did give
My eyes at once to death : but 'twas to live,
To take in draughts of life from the gold fount
Of kind and passionate looks ; to count, and
count

The moments, by some greedy help that seem'd
A second self, that each might be redeem'd
And plunder'd of its load of blessedness.
Ah, desperate mortal ! I e'en dar'd to press
Her very cheek against my crowned lip,
And, at that moment, felt my body dip
Into a warmer air : a moment more,
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store
Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes
A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,
Loiter'd around us ; then of honey cells,
Made delicate from all white-flower bells ;
And once, above the edges of our nest,
An arch face peep'd, —an Oread as I guess'd.

“ Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me
In midst of all this heaven ? Why not see,
Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,
And stare them from me ? But no, like a spark
That needs must die, although its little beam
Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream
Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep.
And so it was, until a gentle creep,
A careful moving caught my waking ears,
And up I started : Ah ! my sighs, my tears,
My clenched hands ;—for lo ! the poppies hung
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day
Had chidden herald Hesperus away,
With leaden looks : the solitary breeze
Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did tease
With wayward melancholy ; and I thought,
Mark me, Peona ! that sometimes it brought
Faint fare-thee-wels, and sigh-shrilled adieus !—
Away I wander'd—all the pleasant hues

Of heaven and earth had faded : deepest shades
Were deepest dungeons ; heavens and sunny glades
Were full of pestilent light ; our taintless rills
Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd gills
Of dying fish ; the vermeil rose had blown
In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown
Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird
Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd
In little journeys, I beheld in it
A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit
My soul with under darkness ; to entice
My stumblings down some monstrous precipice :
Therefore I eager followed, and did curse
The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse,
Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle
heaven !
These things, with all their comfortings, are
given
To my down-sunken hours, and with thee,
Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea
Of weary life.”

Thus ended he, and both
Sat silent : for the maid was very loth
To answer ; feeling well that breathed words
Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords
Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps
Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps,
And wonders ; struggles to devise some blame ;
To put on such a look as would say, *Shame*
On this poor weakness ! but, for all her strife,
She could as soon have crush'd away the life
From a sick dove. At length, to break the
pause,
She said with trembling chance : “ Is this the
cause ?
This all ? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas !
That one who through this middle earth should
pass
Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave
His name upon the harp-string, should achieve
No higher bard than simple maidenhood,
Singing alone, and fearfully, - how the blood
Left his young cheek ; and how he used to stray
He knew not where ; and how he would say,
nay,
If any said 'twas love : and yet 'twas love ;
What could it be but love ? How a ring-dove
Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path ;

JOHN KEATS

And how he died : and then, that love doth
 scathe,
 The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses ;
 And then the ballad of his sad life closes
 With sighs, and an alas !—Endymion !
 Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,—anon
 Among the winds at large—that all may
 hearken !
 Although, before the crystal heavens darken,
 I watch and dote upon the silver lakes
 Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes
 The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold
 sands,
 Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands
 With horses prancing o'er them, palaces
 And towers of amethyst,—would I so tease
 My pleasant days, because I could not mount
 Into those regions ? The Morphean fount
 Of that fine element that visions, dreams,
 And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams
 Into its airy channels with so subtle,
 So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,
 Circled a million times within the space
 Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,
 A tinting of its quality : how light
 Must dreams themselves be ; seeing they're
 more slight
 Than the mere nothing that engenders them !
 Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem
 Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick ?
 Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick
 For nothing but a dream ? " Hereat the youth
 Look'd up : a conflicting of shame and ruth
 Was in his plaited brow : yet, his eyelids
 Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids
 A little breeze to creep between the fans
 Of careless butterflies : amid his pains
 He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew,
 Full palatable ; and a colour grew
 Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeless spake.

" Peona ! ever have I long'd to slake
 My thirst for the world's praises : nothing base,
 No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
 The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd—
 Though now 'tis tatter'd ; leaving my bark bar'd
 And sullenly drifting : yet my higher hope
 Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
 To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.

Wherein lies happiness ? In that which beck
 Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
 A fellowship with essence ; till we shine,
 Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold
 The clear religion of heaven ! Fold
 A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
 And soothe thy lips : hist, when the airy stress
 Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
 And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
 Æolian magic from their lucid wombs :
 Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs ;
 Old ditties sigh above their father's grave ;
 Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave
 Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot ;
 Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
 Where long ago a giant battle was ;
 And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
 In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
 Feel we these things ?—that moment have we
 slept
 Into a sort of oneness, and our state
 Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
 Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
 To the chief intensity : the crown of these
 Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
 Upon the forehead of humanity.
 All its more ponderous and bulky worth
 Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
 A steady splendour ; But at the tip-top,
 There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop
 Of light, and that is love : its influence,
 Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
 At which we start and fret ; till in the end,
 Melting into its radiance, we blend,
 Mingle, and so become a part of it,—
 Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
 So wingedly : when we combine therewith
 Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,
 And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.
 Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,
 That men, who might have tower'd in the van
 Of all the congregated world, to fan
 And winnow from the coming step of time
 All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime
 Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,
 Have been content to let occasion die,
 Whilst they did sleep in love's clysium.
 And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,

ENDYMION

Than speak against this ardent listlessness :
 For I have ever thought that it might bless
 The world with benefits unknowingly ;
 As does the nightingale, upperched high,
 And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves—
 She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives
 How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey
 hood.

Just so may love, although 'tis understood
 The mere commingling of passionate breath,
 Produce more than our searching witnesseth :
 What I know not : but who, of men, can tell
 That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit
 would swell
 To melting pulp, that fish would have bright
 mail,
 The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,
 The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
 The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
 Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,
 If human souls did never kiss and greet ?

“Now, if this earthly love has power to make
 Men's being mortal, immortal : to shake
 Ambition from their memories, and brim
 Their measure of content : what merest whim,
 Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
 To one, who keeps within his steadfast aim
 A love immortal, an immortal too.
 Look not so wilder'd ; for these things are true,
 And never can be born of atomics
 That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,
 Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure,
 My restless spirit never could endure
 To brood so long upon one luxury,
 Unless it did, though fearfully, espy
 A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.
 My sayings will the less obscured seem,
 When I have told thee how my waking sight
 Has made me scruple whether that same night
 Was pass'd in dreaming. Harken, sweet
 Peona !

Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,
 Which we should see but for these darkening
 boughs,
 Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows
 Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart,
 And meet so nearly, that with wings out-
 raught,

And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide
 Past them, but he must brush on every side.
 Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell,
 Far as the slabbed margin of a well,
 Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye
 Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.
 Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks
 set

Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet
 Edges them round, and they have golden
 pits :

'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and
 slits

In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my
 seat,

When all above was faint with mid-day heat.
 And there in strife no burning thoughts to
 heed,

I'd bubble up the water through a reed ;
 So reaching back to boy-hood : make me ships
 Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,
 With leaves stuck in them ; and the Neptune be
 Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily,

When love-lorn hours had left me less a child,
 I sat contemplating the figures wild

Of o'er head clouds melting the mirror through.
 Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew

A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver ;
 So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver
 The happy chance : so happy, I was fain
 To follow it upon the open plain,

And, therefore, was just going ; when, behold !
 A wonder, fair as any I have told—

The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,
 Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap
 Through the cool depth.—It moved as if to
 flee—

I started up, when lo ! refreshfully,
 There came upon my face, in plenteous showers
 Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and
 flowers,

Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight,
 Bathing my spirit in a new delight.

Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss
 Alone preserved me from the drear abyss

Of death, for the fair form had gone again.
 Pleasure is oft a visitant ; but pain

Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth
 On the deer's tender haunches : late, and loth,

JOHN KEATS

'Tis scar'd away by slow returning pleasure.
 How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure
 Of weary days, made deeper exquisite,
 By a fore-knowledge of unslumbering night!
 Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still,
 Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill:
 And a whole age of lingering moments crept
 Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept
 Away at once the deadly yellow spleen.
 Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen;
 Once more been tortured with renewed life.
 When last the wintry gusts gave over strife
 With the conquering sun of spring, and left the
 skies

Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes
 In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,—
 That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs,
 My hunting cap, because I laugh'd and smil'd,
 Chatted with thee, and many days exil'd
 All torment from my breast;—'twas even then,
 Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den
 Of helpless discontent,—hurling my lance
 From place to place, and following at chance,
 At last, by hap, through some young trees it
 struck,

And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck
 In the middle of a brook,—whose silver ramble
 Down twenty little falls, through reeds and
 bramble,
 Tracing along, it brought me to a cave,
 Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did
 lave

The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,—
 'Mong which it gurgled blythe adieus, to mock
 Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead,
 Hung a lush screen of drooping weeds, and
 spread

Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's
 home.

'Ah! impious mortal, whither do I roam?'
 Said I, low voic'd: 'Ah, whither! 'Tis the
 grot

Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot,
 Doth her resign; and where her tender hands
 She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands:
 Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,
 And babbles thorough silence, till her wits
 Are gone in tender madness, and anon,
 Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone

Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,
 And breathe them sighingly among the boughs,
 To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,
 Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,
 And weave them dyingly—send honey-whispers
 Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers
 May sigh my love unto her pitying!
 O charitable echo! hear, and sing
 This ditty to her!—tell her '—so I stay'd
 My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,
 Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,
 And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.
 Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name
 Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents
 came:

'Endymion! the cave is secreter
 Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
 No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise
 Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling
 cloys

And trembles through my labyrinthine hair.'
 At that oppress'd I hurried in.—Ah! where
 Are those swift moments? Whither are they
 fled?

I'll smile no more, Peona; nor will wed
 Sorrow the way to death; but patiently
 Bear up against it: so farewell, sad sigh;
 And come instead demurest meditation,
 To occupy me wholly, and to fashion
 My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.
 No more will I count over, link by link,
 My chain of grief: no longer strive to find
 A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind
 Blustering about my ears: aye, thou shalt see,
 Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be;
 What a calm round of hours shall make my
 days.

There is a paly flame of hope that plays
 Where'er I look: but yet, I'll say 'tis naught—
 And here I bid it die. Have not I caught,
 Already, a more healthy countenance?
 By this the sun is setting; we may chance
 Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car."

This said, he rose, faint-smiling like a star
 Through autumn mists, and took Peona's
 hand:
 They stept into the boat, and launch'd from
 land.

ENDYMION

BOOK II

O SOVEREIGN power of love! O grief!
O balm!

All records, saving thine, come cool,
and calm,
And shadowy, through the mist of passed years:
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears
Have become indolent; but touching thine,
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,
One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.
The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their
blaze,
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen
blades,
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks—all dimly
fades

Into some backward corner of the brain;
Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain
The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.
Hence, pageant history! hence, gilded cheat!
Swart planet in the universe of deeds!
Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds
Along the pebbled shore of memory!
Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be
Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified
To goodly vessels; many a sail of pride,
And golden-keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry.
But wherefore this? What care, though owl
did fly

About the great Athenian admiral's mast?
What care, though striding Alexander past
The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
Through old Ulysses tortured from his
slumbers

The glutt'd Cyclops, what care?—Juliet leaning
Amid her window-flowers,—sighing,—weaning
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
Doth more avail than these: the silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully
Must such conviction come upon his head,
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,
The path of love and poesy. But rest,
In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear •

Love's standard on the battlements of song.
So once more days and nights aid me along,
Like legion'd soldiers.

Brain-sick shepherd prince,
What promise hast thou faithful guarded since
The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows
Come with the constant dawn upon thy
morrrows?

Alas! 'tis his old grief. For many days,
Has he been wandering in uncertain ways:
Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks;
Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes
Of the lone woodcutter; and listening still,
Hour after hour, to each lush-leav'd rill.
Now he is sitting by a shady spring,
And elbow-deep with feverous fingering
Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose tree
Pavilions him in bloom, and he doth see
A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now
He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how!
It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight;
And, in the middle, there is softly pight
A golden butterfly; upon whose wings
There must be surely character'd strange things,
For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,
Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands:
Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands
His limbs are loos'd, and eager, on he hies
Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.
It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was;
And like a new-born spirit did he pass
Through the green evening quiet in the sun,
O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun,
Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight
dreams

The summer time away. One track unseams
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew,
He sinks adown a solitary glen,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet
Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide,
Until it reached a splashing fountain's side

JOHN KEATS

That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd
 Unto the temperate air: then high it soar'd,
 And, downward, suddenly began to dip,
 As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip
 The crystal spout-head: so it did, with touch
 Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch
 Even with mealy gold the waters clear.
 But, at that very touch, to disappear
 So fairy-quick, was strange! Bewildered,
 Endymion sought around, and shook each bed
 Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung
 Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,
 What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest?
 It was a nymph uprisen to the breast
 In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood
 'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood.
 To him her dripping hand she softly kist,
 And anxiously began to plait and twist
 Her ringlets round her fingers, saying: "Youth!
 Too long, alas, hast thou starv'd on the ruth,
 The bitterness of love: too long indeed,
 Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed
 Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer
 All the bright riches of my crystal coffer
 To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish,
 Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,
 Vermilion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze;
 Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws
 A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands
 Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands
 By my diligent springs; my level lilies, shells,
 My charming rod, my potent river spells;
 Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup
 Meander gave me,—for I bubbled up
 To fainting creatures in a desert wild.
 But woe is me, I am but as a child
 To gladden thee; and all I dare to say,
 Is, that I pity thee; that on this day
 I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far
 In other regions, past the scanty bar
 To mortal steps, before thou canst be ta'en
 From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
 Into the gentle bosom of thy love.
 Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above:
 But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewell!
 I have a ditty for my hollow cell."

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's gaze,
 Who brooded o'er the water in amaze:

The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its pool
 Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,
 Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,
 And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill
 Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,
 Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr
 Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down;
 And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown
 Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,
 Thus breath'd he to himself: "Whoso encamps
 To take a fancied city of delight,
 O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
 After long toil and travelling, to miss
 The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile:
 Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil;
 Another city doth he set about,
 Free from the smallest pebble-bead of doubt
 That he will seize on trickling honey-combs:
 Alas, he finds them dry; and then he foams,
 And onward to another city speeds.
 But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
 The disappointment, the anxiety,
 Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
 All human; bearing in themselves this good,
 That they are still the air, the subtle food,
 To make us feel existence, and to shew
 How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,
 Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,
 There is no depth to strike in: I can see
 Nought earthly worth my compassing; so stand
 Upon a misty, jutting head of land—
 Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute,
 When mad Eurydice is listening to't;
 I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,
 With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,
 But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,
 Than be—I care not what. O meekest dove
 Of heaven! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and
 fair!
 From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,
 Glance but one little beam of temper'd light
 Into my bosom, that the dreadful might
 And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd!
 Yet do not so, sweet queen; one torment
 spar'd,
 Would give a pang to jealous misery,
 Worse than the torment's self: but rather tie
 Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out
 My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout

ENDYMION

Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou,
 Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow
 Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream.
 O be propitious, nor severely deem
 My madness impious ; for, by all the stars
 That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars
 That kept my spirit in are burst—that I
 Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky !
 How beautiful thou art ! The world how deep !
 How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep
 Around their axle ! Then these gleaming
 reins,
 How lithe ! When this thy chariot attains
 Its airy goal, haply some bower veils
 Those twilight eyes ? Those eyes !—my spirit
 fails—
 Dear goddess, help ! or the wide-gaping air
 Will gulph me—help !”—At this with madden'd
 stare,
 And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood ;
 Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood,
 Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.
 And, but from the deep cavern there was
 borne
 A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone ;
 Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan
 Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth :
 “ Descend,
 Young mountaineer ! descend where alleys
 bend
 Into the sparry hollows of the world !
 Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd
 As from thy threshold ; day by day hast been
 A little lower than the chilly sheen
 Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms
 Into the deadening ether that still charms
 Their marble being : now, as deep profound
 As those are high, descend ! He ne'er is
 crown'd
 With immortality, who fears to follow
 Where airy voices lead : so through the hollow,
 The silent mysteries of earth, descend ! ”

He heard but the last words, nor could
 contend
 One moment in reflection : for he fled
 Into the fearful deep, to hide his head
 From the clear moon, the trees, and coming
 madness.

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for
 sadness ;
 Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite
 To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,
 The region ; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
 But mingled up ; a gleaming melancholy ;
 A dusky empire and its diadems ;
 One faint eternal eventide of gems.
 Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,
 Along whose track the prince quick footsteps
 told,
 With all its lines abrupt and angular :
 Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star,
 Through a vast antre ; then the metal woof,
 Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous
 roof
 Curves hugely : now, far in the deep abyss,
 It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
 Fancy into belief : anon it leads
 Through winding passages, where sameness
 breeds
 Vexing conceptions of some sudden change ;
 Whether to silver grot, or giant range
 Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
 Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge
 Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
 Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth
 A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come
 But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb
 His bosom grew, when first he, far away,
 Descried an orb'd diamond, set to fray
 Old darkness from his throne : 'twas like the
 sun
 Uprisen o'er chaos : and with such a stun
 Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,
 He saw not fiercer wonders—past the wit
 Of any spirit to tell, but one of those
 Who, when this planet's sphering time doth
 close,
 Will be its high remembrancers : who they ?
 The mighty ones who have made eternal day
 For Greece and England. While astonishment
 With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went
 Into a marble gallery, passing through
 A mimic temple, so complete and true
 In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd
 To search it inwards ; whence far off appear'd,
 Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine,
 And just beyond, on light tiptoe divine,

JOHN KEATS

A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully,
The youth approach'd ; oft turning his veil'd eye
Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old.
And when, more near against the marble cold
He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread
All courts and passages, where silence dead
Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured
faint :

And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint
Himself with every mystery, and awe ;
Till, weary, he sat down before the maw
Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim
To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.
There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before,
And thoughts of self came on, how crude and
sore

The journey homeward to habitual self !
A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf,
Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,
Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,
Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing
In lone Endymion's ear, now he has raught
The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the thought,
The deadly feel of solitude : for lo !
He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild
In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd,
The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,
Like herded elephants ; nor felt, nor prest
Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air ;
But far from such companionship to wear
An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away,
Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,
Tracing fantastic figures with his spear ?
"No !" exclaim'd he, "why should I tarry
here?"

No ! loudly echoed times innumerable.
At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell
His paces back into the temple's chief ;
Warming and glowing strong in the belief
Of help from Dian : so that when again
He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,
Moving more near the while : "O Haunter
chaste

Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen
Art thou now forested ? O woodland Queen,

What smoothest air thy smoother forehead
woos ?

Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos
Of thy disparted nymphs ? Through what dark
tree

Glimmers thy crescent ? Wheresoe'er it be,
'Tis in the breath of heaven : thou dost taste
Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste
Thy loveliness in dismal elements ;
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,
There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,
An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name !
Within my breast there lives a choking flame—
O let me cool 't the zephyr-boughs among !
A homeward fever parches up my tongue—
O let me slake it at the running springs !
Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings—
O let me once more hear the linnet's note !
Before mine eyes thick-films and shadows float—
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light !
Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white ?
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice !
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-
juice ?

O think how this dry palate would rejoice !
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,
O think how I should love a bed of flowers !—
Young goddess ! let me see my native bowers !
Deliver me from this rapacious deep !"

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap,
His destiny, alert he stood : but when
Obstinate silence came heavily again,
Feeling about for its old couch of space
And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face
Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.
But 'twas not long ; for, sweeter than the rill
To its old channel, or a swollen tide
To margin shallows, were the leaves he spied,
And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle
crowns

Up heaping through the slab : refreshment
drowns

Itself, and strives its own delights to hide—
Nor in one spot alone ; the floral pride
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew
Before his footsteps ; as when heav'd ane
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,

ENDYMION

Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam,
 . all hoar,
 Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense,
 Upon his fairy journey on he hastes ;
 So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes
 One moment with his hand among the sweets :
 Onward he goes—he stops—his bosom beats
 As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm
 Of which the throbs were born. This still alarm,
 This sleepy music, forc'd him walk tiptoe :
 For it came more softly than the east could blow
 Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles ;
 Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles
 Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
 To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,
 Who lov'd—and music slew not? 'Tis the
 pest
 Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest ;
 That things of delicate and tenderest worth
 Are swallow'd all, and made a scared dearth,
 By one consuming flame : it doth immerse
 And suffocate true blessings in a curse.
 Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,
 Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this
 Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear ;
 First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear,
 Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,
 Had not a heavenly guide benignant led
 To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his
 head
 Brushing, awakened : then the sounds again
 Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain
 Over a bower, where little space he stood ;
 For as the sunset peeps into a wood
 So saw he panting light, and towards it went
 Through winding alleys ; and lo, wonderment !
 Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,
 Cupids a slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,
 At last, with sudden step, he came upon
 A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high,
 Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy, •

And more of beautiful and strange beside :
 For on a silken couch of rosy pride,
 In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
 Of fondest beauty ; fonder, in fair sooth,
 Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach :
 And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,
 Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
 Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds --
 Not hiding up an Apollonian curve
 Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
 Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light ;
 But rather, giving them to the filled sight
 Officiously. Sideway his face repos'd
 On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd,
 By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth
 To slumb'ry pout ; just as the morning south
 Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head,
 Four lily stalks did their white honours wed
 To make a coronal ; and round him grew
 All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
 Together interwin'd and trammel'd fresh :
 The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh,
 Shading its Ethiop berries ; and woodbine,
 Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine ;
 Convolvulus in streaked vases flush ;
 The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush ;
 And virgin's bower, trailing airily ;
 With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,
 Stood serene Cupids watching silently.
 One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings.
 Muffling to death the pathos with his wings ;
 And, ever and anon, uprose to look
 At the youth's slumber ; while another took
 A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew,
 And shook it on his hair ; another flew
 In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise
 Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more,
 The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and o'er ;
 Until, impatient in embarrassment,
 He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went
 To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway,
 Smiling, thus whisper'd : " Though from upper
 day

Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here
 Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer !
 For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour,
 When some ethereal and high-favouring donor

JOHN KEATS

Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense ;
 As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence
 Was I in no wise startled. So recline
 Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,
 Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
 Since Ariadne was a vintager,
 So cool a purple : taste these juicy pears,
 Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
 Were high about Pomona : here is cream,
 Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam ;
 Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd
 For the boy Jupiter : and here, undimm'd
 By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums
 Ready to melt between an infant's gums :
 And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees,
 In starlight, by the three Hesperides.
 Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know
 Of all these things around us." He did so,
 Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre ;
 And thus : "I need not any hearing tire
 By telling how the sea-born goddess pin'd
 For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind
 Him all in all unto her doting self.
 Who would not be so prison'd? but, fond elf,
 He was content to let her amorous plea
 Faint through his careless arms ; content to see
 An unseiz'd heaven dying at his feet ;
 Content, O fool ! to make a cold retreat,
 When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn,
 Lay sorrowing ; when every tear was born
 Of diverse passion ; when her lips and eyes
 Were clos'd in sullen moisture, and quick sighs
 Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils
 small.
 Hush ! no exclaim—yet, justly mightst thou call
 Curses upon his head.—I was half glad,
 But my poor mistress went distract and mad,
 When the boar tusk'd him : so away she flew
 To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew
 Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's
 beard ;
 Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd
 Each summer time to life. Lo ! this is he,
 That same Adonis, safe in the privacy
 Of this still region all his winter-sleep.
 Aye, sleep ; for when our love-sick queen did
 weep
 Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower
 Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy power,

Medicined death to a lengthened drowsiness :
 The which she fills with visions, and doth dress
 In all this quiet luxury ; and hath set
 Us young immortals, without any let,
 To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh
 pass'd,
 Even to a moment's filling up, and fast
 She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through
 The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew
 Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle.
 Look ! how those winged listeners all this while
 Stand anxious : see ! behold !"—This clamant
 word
 Broke through the careful silence ; for they heard
 A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter'd
 Pigeons and doves : Adonis something mutter'd
 The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh
 Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually
 Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum
 Of sudden voices, echoing, "Come ! come !
 Arise ! awake ! Clear summer has forth walk'd
 Unto the clover-sward, and she has talk'd
 Full soothingly to every nested finch :
 Rise, Cupids ! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch
 To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life
 begin !"
 At this, from every side they hurried in,
 Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,
 And doubling over head their little fists
 In backward yawns. But all were soon alive .
 For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive
 In nectar'd clouds and curls through water fair,
 So from the arbour roof down swell'd an air
 Odorous and enlivening , making all
 To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call
 For their sweet queen : when lo ! the wreathed
 green
 Disparted, and far upward could be seen
 Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne,
 Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of
 morn,
 Spun off a drizzling dew,—which falling chill
 On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still
 Nestle and turn uneasily about.
 Soon were the white doves plain, with necks
 stretch'd out,
 And silken traces lighten'd in descent ;
 And soon, returning from love's banishment,
 Queen Venus leaning downward open arm'd :

ENDYMION

Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd
 A tumult to his heart, and a new life
 Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife,
 But for her comforting! unhappy sight,
~~But~~ meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can
 write
 Of these first minutes? The unchariest muse
 To embracements warm as theirs makes coy
 excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there,
 Saving love's self, who stands superb to share
 The general gladness: awfully he stands;
 A sovereign quell is in his waving hands;
 No sight can bear the lightning of his bow;
 His quiver is mysterious, none can know
 What themselves think of it; from forth his eyes
 There darts strange light of varied hues and
 dyes:

A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who
 Look full upon it feel anon the blue
 Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.
 Endymion feels it, and no more controls
 The burning prayer within him; so, bent low,
 He had begun a plaining of his woe.
 But Venus, bending forward, said: "My child,
 Favour this gentle youth; his days are wild
 With love—he—but alas! too well I see
 Thou know'st the deepness of his misery.
 Ah, smile not so, my son! I tell thee true,
 That when through heavy hours I us'd to rue
 The endless sleep of this new-born Adon',
 This stranger ay I pitied. For upon
 A dreary morning once I fled away
 Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray
 For this my love: for vexing Mars had teaz'd
 Me even to tears: thence, when a little eas'd,
 Down looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,
 I saw this youth as he despairing stood:
 Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the
 wind;

Those same full fringed lids a constant blind
 Over his sullen eyes; I saw him throw
 Himself on wither'd leaves, even as though
 Death had come sudden; for no jot he mov'd,
 Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he lov'd
 Some fair immortal, and that his embrace
 Had zoned her through the night. There is
 no trace

Of this in heaven: I have mark'd each cheek,
 And find it is the vainest thing to seek;
 And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.
 Endymion! one day thou wilt be blest:
 So still obey the guiding hand that fends
 Thee safely through these wonders for sweet
 ends.

'Tis a concealment needful in extreme;
 And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam
 Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now
 adieu!

Here must we leave thee."—At these words up
 flew

The impatient doves, up rose the floating car,
 Up went the hum celestial. High afar
 The Latmian saw them minish into nought;
 And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he
 caught

A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow.
 When all was darkened, with Ætnean throe
 The earth clos'd—gave a solitary moan—
 And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did ~~not~~ *stare* aghast,
 For all those visions were o'ergone, and past,
 And he in loneliness; he felt assur'd
 Of happy times, when all he had endur'd
 Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.
 So, with unusual gladness, on he hies
 Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,
 Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquois
 floor,

Black polish'd porticos of awful shade,
 And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,
 Leading afar past wild magnificence,
 Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence
 Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er
 Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,
 Streams subterranean tease their granite beds;
 Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads
 Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash
 The waters with his spear; but at the splash
 Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose
 Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose
 His diamond path with fretwork, streaming
 round

Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound,
 Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells
 Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells

JOHN KEATS

On this delight; for, every minute's space,
The streams with changed magic interlace:
Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees,
Moving about as in a gentle wind,
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd,
Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,
Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair.
Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare;
And then the water, into stubborn streams
Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oaken beams,
Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof,
Of those dusk places in times far aloof
Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loth farewell
To these founts Protean, passing gulph, and dell,

And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes,
Half seen through deepest gloom, and griesly
gapes,

Blackening on every side, and overhead
A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread
With starlight gems: aye, all so huge and
strange,

The solitary felt a hurried change
Working within him into something dreary,—
Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost, and weary,
And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds.
But he revives at once: for who beholds
New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough?
Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
Came mother Cybele! alone—alone—

In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown
About her majesty, and front death pale,
With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale
The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed
maws,

Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
Uplifted drowsily, and nerry tails
Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
This shadowy queen athwart, and fains away
In another gloomy arch.

Wherefore delay,
Young traveller, in such a mournful place?
Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace
The diamond path? And does it indeed end
Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend
Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne
Call ardently! He was indeed wayworn;

Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost;
To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost
Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose wings,
Without one impious word, himself he flings;
Committed to the darkness and the gloom
Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,
Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell
Through unknown things; till exhaled aspho-
del,

And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd,
Came swelling forth where little caves were
wreath'd

So thick with leaves and mosses, that they
seem'd

Large honey-combs of green, and freshly teem'd
With airs delicious. In the greenest nook
The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown
With golden moss. His every sense had grown
Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head
Flew a delight half graspable; his tread
Was Hesperean; to his capable ears
Silence was music from the holy spheres;
A dewy luxury was in his eyes;
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs
And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell
He wander'd through, oft wondering at such
swell

Of sudden exaltation: but, "Alas!"
Said he, "will all this gush of feeling pass
Away in solitude? And must they wane,
Like melodies upon a sandy plain,
Without an echo? Then shall I be left
So sad, so melancholy, so bereft!

Yet still I feel immortal! O my love,
My breath of life, where art thou? High above,
Dancing before the morning gates of heaven?
Or keeping watch among those starry seven,
Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters,
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd
daughters?

Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's,
Weaving a coronal of tender scions
For very idleness? Where'er thou art,
Methinks it now is at my will to start
Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train,
And snatch thee from the morning; o'er th

• main

ENDYMION

To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off
From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to doff
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh
leaves.

No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives
Its powerless self: I know this cannot be.
O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee
To her entrancements: hither sleep awhile!
Hither most gentle sleep! and soothing foil
For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endued
With power to dream deliciously; so wound
Through a dim passage, searching till he found
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
He threw himself, and just into the air
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss!
A naked waist: "Fair Cupid, whence is this?"
A well-known voice sigh'd, "Sweetest, here
am I!"

At which soft ravishment, with doting cry
They trembled to each other.—Helicon!
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er
These sorry pages; then the verse would soar
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark
Over his nested young: but all is dark
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count
Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll
Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll
Is in Apollo's hand: our dazed eyes
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies:
The world has done its duty, Yet, oh yet,
Although the sun of poesy is set,
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep
That there is no old power left to steep
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.
Long time ere silence did their anxious fears
Question that thus it was; long time they lay
Fondling and kissing every doubt away;
Long time ere soft caressing sobs began
To mellow into words, and then there ran
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet
lips.

"O known Unknown! from whom my being
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not
Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot .

Pillow my chin for ever? ever press
These toying hands and kiss their smooth
excess?

Why not for ever and for ever feel
That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt
steal

Away from me again, indeed, indeed—
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed
My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair!
Is —is it to be so? No! Who will dare
To pluck thee from me? And, of thine own
will,

Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still
Let me entwine thee surer, surer—now
How can we part? Elysium! who art thou?
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere?
Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace,
By the most soft completion of thy face,
Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes,
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—
These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine,
The passion"—"O do'ld Ida the divine!
Endymion! dearest! Ah, unhappy me!
His soul will 'scape us—O felicity!
How he does love me! His poor temples beat
To the very tune of love—how sweet, sweet,
sweet.

Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die;
Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by
In tranced dulness; speak, and let that spell
Affright this lethargy! I cannot quell
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast
Until we taste the life of love again.
What! dost thou move? dost kiss? O bliss!
O pain!

I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive;
And so long absence from thee doth bereave
My soul of any rest: yet must I hence:
Yet, can I not to starry eminence
Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own
Myself to thee: Ah, dearest, do not groan
Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,
And I must blush in heaven. O that I
Had done it already: that the dreadful smiles
At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles,
Had waned from Olympus' solemn height,
And from all serious Gods; that our delight

JOHN KEATS

Was quite forgotten, save of us alone!
 And wherefore so ashamed? 'Tis but to atone
 For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes:
 Yet must I be a coward!—Horror rushes
 Too palpable before me—the sad look
 Of Jove—Minerva's start—no bosom shook
 With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion
 In reverence veiled—my crystalline dominion
 Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity!
 But what is this to love? O I could fly
 With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,
 So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours,
 Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once
 That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—
 Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—
 O I do think that I have been alone
 In chastity: yes, Pallas has been sighing,
 While every eve saw me my hair untying
 With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love,
 I was as vague as solitary dove,
 Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft
 kiss—

Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,
 An immortality of passion's thine:
 Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine
 Of heaven ambrosial; and we will shade
 Ourselves whole summers by a river glade;
 And I will tell thee stories of the sky,
 And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.
 My happy love will overwing all bounds!
 O let me melt into thee; let the sounds
 Of our close voices marry at their birth;
 Let us entwine hoveringly—O dearth
 Of human words! roughness of mortal speech!
 Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach
 Thine honied tongue—lute-breathings, which I
 gasp

To have thee understand, now while I clasp
 Thee thus, and weep for fondness—I am pain'd,
 Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd
 In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?"—
 Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife
 Melted into a languor. He return'd
 Entranced vows and tears.

Ye who have yearn'd
 With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
 For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
 Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told

By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
 And then the forest told it in a dream
 To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam;
 A poet caught as he was journeying
 To Phœbus' shrine; and in it he did fling
 His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
 And after, straight in that inspired place
 He sang the story up into the air,
 Giving it universal freedom. There
 Has it been ever sounding for those ears
 Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend
 cheers

Yon centinel stars; and he who listens to it
 Must surely be self-doom'd or he will rue it:
 For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,
 Made fiercer by a fear lest any part
 Should be engulphed in the eddying wind.
 As much as here is penn'd doth always find
 A resting place, thus much comes clear and
 plain;

Anon the strange voice is upon the wane—
 And 'tis but echo'd from departing sound,
 That the fair visitant at last unwound
 Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.—
 Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.—
 Endymion awoke, that grief of hers
 Sweet paining on his ear: he sickly guess'd
 How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd
 His empty arms together, hung his head,
 And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed
 Sat silently. Love's madness he had known:
 Often with more than tortured lion's groan
 Moanings had burst from him; but now that
 rage

Had pass'd away: no longer did he wage
 A rough-voic'd war against the dooming stars.
 No, he had left too much for such harsh jars:
 The lyre of his soul Æolian tun'd
 Forgot all violence, and but commun'd
 With melancholy thought: O he had swoon'd
 Drunken from pleasure's nipple; and his love,
 Henceforth was dove-like.—Loth was he to
 move

From the imprinted couch, and when he did,
 'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid
 In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd
 Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd

ENDYMION

• Alecto's serpents ; ravishments more keen
 • Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean
 Over eclipsing eyes : and at the last
 • It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,
 O'er studded with a thousand, thousand pearls,
 And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn
 curls,

• Of every shape and size, even to the bulk
 In which whales arbour close, to brood and sulk
 Against an endless storm. Moreover too,
 Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue,
 • Ready to snort their streams. In this cool
 wonder

Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder
 On all his life : his youth, up to the day
 When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands
 gay,

He stept upon his shepherd throne : the look
 Of his white palace in wild forest nook,
 And all the revels he had lorded there :
 Each tender maiden whom he once thought
 fair,

With every friend and fellow-woodlander—
 Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur
 Of the old bards to mighty deeds : his plans
 To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans :
 That wondrous night : the great Pan-festival :
 His sister's sorrow ; and his wanderings all,
 Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd :
 Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd
 High with excessive love. "And now," thought
 he,

"How long must I remain in jeopardy
 Of blank amazements that amaze no more ?
 Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
 All other depths are shallow : essences,
 Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
 Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,
 And make my branches lift a golden fruit
 Into the bloom of heaven : other light,
 • Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight
 The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,
 • Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark !
 • My silent ; are echoing from these
 shells

Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells
 Of noises far away ?—list !"—Hereupon
 He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone
 Came louder, and behold, there as he lay,

On either side outgush'd, with misty spray,
 A copious spring ; and both together dash'd
 Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and
 lash'd

Among the conchs and shells of the lofty
 Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot
 Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise
 As of some breathless racers whose hopes poize
 Upon the last few steps, and with spent force
 Along the ground they took a winding course.
 Endymion follow'd—for it seem'd that one
 Ever pursued, the other strove to shun—
 Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh
 He had left thinking of the mystery,—
 And was now rapt in tender hoverings
 Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah ! what is it sings
 His dream away ? What melodies are these ?
 They sound as through the whispering of trees,
 Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear !

"O Arethusa, peerless nymph ! why fear
 Such tenderness as mine ? Great Dian, why,
 Why didst thou hear her prayer ? O that I
 Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
 Circling about her waist, and striving how
 To entice her to a dive ! then stealing in
 Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.
 O that her shining hair was in the sun,
 And I distilling from it thence to run
 In amorous rillets down her shrinking form !
 To linger on her lily shoulders, warm
 Between her kissing breasts, and every charm
 Touch raptur'd !—See how painfully I flow :
 Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe.
 Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead,
 A happy wooer, to the flowery mead
 Where all that beauty snar'd me."— "Cruel god,
 Desist ! or my offended mistress' nod
 Will stagnate all thy fountains :—tease me not
 With syren words—Ah, have I really got
 Such power to madden thee ? And is it true—
 Away, away, or I shall dearly rue
 My very thoughts : in mercy then away,
 Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey
 My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane.
 O, Oread-Queen ! would that thou hadst a pain
 Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn
 And be a criminal. Alas, I burn,
 I shudder—gentle river, get thee hence.

JOHN KEATS

Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense
 Of mine was once made perfect in these woods.
 Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent
 floods,
 Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave;
 But ever since I heedlessly did lave
 In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow
 Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me so,
 And call it love? Alas, 'twas cruelty.
 Not once more did I close my happy eye
 Amid the thrushes' song. Away! Avaunt!
 O 'twas a cruel thing."—"Now thou dost taunt
 So softly, Arethusa, that I think
 If thou wast playing on my shady brink,
 Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent
 maid!
 Stifle thine heart no more; nor be afraid
 Of angry powers: there are deities
 Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful
 sighs
 'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour
 A dewy balm upon them!—fear no more,
 Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel
 Sometime these very pangs. Dear maiden,
 steal
 Blushing into my soul, and let us fly
 These dreary caverns for the open sky.
 I will delight thee all my winding course,
 From the green sea up to my hidden source
 About Arcadian forests; and will shew
 The channels where my coolest waters flow
 Through mossy rocks; where 'mid exuberant
 green,
 I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen
 Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim
 Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim
 Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees
 Buzz from their honied wings: and thou shouldst
 please
 Thyself to choose the richest, where we might
 Be incense-pillow'd every summer night.
 Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness,
 And let us be thus comforted; unless
 Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream
 Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam,
 And pour to death along some hungry sands."—
 "What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands
 Severe before me: persecuting fate!
 Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late

A huntress free in"—At this, sudden fell
 Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell.
 The Latmian listen'd, but he heard no more;
 Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er
 The name of Arethusa. On the verge
 Of that dark gulph he wept, and said: "I urge
 Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,
 By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,
 If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains;
 And make them happy in some happy plains."

He turn'd—there was a whelming sound—
 he slept,
 There was a cooler light; and so he kept
 Towards it by a sandy path, and lo!
 More suddenly than doth a moment go,
 The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
 He saw the giant sea above his head.

BOOK III

THERE are who lord it o'er their fellow-
 men
 With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
 Their baaing vanities, to browse away
 The comfortable green and juicy hay
 From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!
 Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
 Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
 Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one
 tinge
 Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight
 Able to face an owl's, they still are dight
 By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
 And crowns, and turbans. With unladen
 breasts,
 Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount
 To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,
 Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their
 thrones—
 Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
 Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,
 And sudden cannon. Ah! how all this hums,
 In wakeful cars, like uproar past and gone—
 Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,
 And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.—
 Are then regalities all gilded masks?
 No, there are throned seats unscalable
 But by a patient wing, a constant spell,
 Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd,

ENDYMION

Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,
 And poize about in cloudy thunder-tents
 To watch the abysm-birth of elements.
 Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate
 A thousand Powers keep religious state,
 In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne ;
 And, silent as a consecrated urn,
 Hold sphery sessions for a season due.
 Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few !
 Have bared their operations to this globe—
 Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe
 Our piece of heaven—whose benevolence
 Shakes hands with our own Ceres ; every
 sense
 Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,
 As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud
 'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,
 Eterne Apollo ! that thy Sister fair
 Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest.
 When thy gold breath is misting in the west,
 She unobserved steals unto her throne,
 And there she sits most meek and most alone ;
 As if she had not pomp subservient ;
 As if thine eye, high Poet ! was not bent
 Towards her with the Muses in thine heart ;
 As if the ministring stars kept not apart,
 Waiting for silver-footed messages.
 O Moon ! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees
 Feel palpitations when thou lookest in :
 O Moon ! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
 The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
 Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip
 Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping
 kine,
 Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields
 divine :
 Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,
 Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes ;
 And yet thy benediction passeth not
 One obscure hiding-place, one little spot
 Where pleasure may be sent : the nested wren
 Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,
 And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf
 Takes glimpses of thee ; thou art a relief
 To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
 Within its pearly house.—The mighty deeps,
 The monstrous sea is thine—the myriad sea !
 O Moon ! far-spooming Ocean bows to thee.
 And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia ! where art thou now ? What far
 abode
 Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine
 Such utmost beauty ? Alas, thou dost pine
 For one as sorrowful : thy cheek is pale
 For one whose cheek is pale : thou dost bewail
 His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou
 sigh ?
 Ah ! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,
 Or what a thing is love ! 'Tis She, but lo !
 How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe !
 She dies at the thinnest cloud ; her loveliness
 Is wan on Neptune's blue : yet there's a stress
 Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,
 Dancing upon the waves, as if to please
 The curly foam with amorous influence.
 O, not so idle : for down-glancing thence
 She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about
 O'erwhelming water-courses ; scaring out
 The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and
 fright'ning
 Their savage eyes with unaccustomed lightning.
 Where will the splendor be content to reach ?
 O love ! how potent hast thou been to teach
 Strange journeyings ! Wherever beauty dwells,
 In gulph or aerie, mountains or deep dells,
 In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
 Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.
 Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath ;
 Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of
 death ;
 Thou madest Pluto bear thin element ;
 And now, O winged Chieftain ! thou hast sent
 A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,
 To find Endymion.

On old sand impearl'd
 With lily shells, and pebbles milky white,
 Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her light
 Against his pallid face : he felt the charm
 To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm
 Of his heart's blood : 'twas very sweet ; he stay'd
 His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid
 His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds,
 To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads,
 Lashed from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.
 And so he kept, until the rosy veils
 Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand
 Were lifted from the water's breast, and fann'd

JOHN KEATS

Into sweet air ; and sober'd morning came
Meekly through billows :—when like taper-flame
Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,
He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare
Along his fated way.

Far had he roam'd,
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd,
Above, around, and at his feet ; save things
More dead than Morpheus' imaginings :
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large
Of gone sea-warriors ; brazen beaks and targe :
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost
The sway of human hand ; gold vase emboss'd
With long-forgotten story, and wherein
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin
But those of Saturn's vintage ; mouldering scrolls,
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls
Who first were on the earth ; and sculptures
rude

In ponderous stone, developing the mood
Of ancient Nox ;—then skeletons of man,
Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,
And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw
Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe
These secrets struck into him ; and unless
Dian had chased away that heaviness,
He might have died : but now, with cheered
feel,
He onward kept ; wooing these thoughts to
steal
About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

“What is there in thee, Moon ! that thou
shouldst move
My heart so potently ? When yet a child
I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd.
Thou seem'dst my sister : hand in hand we
went
From eve to morn across the firmament.
No apples would I gather from the tree,
Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously :
No tumbling water ever spake romance,
But when my eyes with thine thereon could
dance :
No woods were green enough, no bower divine,
Until thou liftedst up thine eyelids fine :
In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take,
Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake ;

And, in the summer tide of blossoming,
No one but thee hath heard me blithely sing ;
And mesh my dewy flowers all the night.
No melody was like a passing spright
If it went not to solemnize thy reign.
Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain
By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end ;
And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend
With all my ardours : thou wast the deep glen ;
Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage's pen—
The poet's harp—the voice of friends—the sun ;
Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won ;
Thou wast my clarion's blast—thou wast my
steed—

My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed :—
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon !
O what a wild and harmonized tune
My spirit struck from all the beautiful !
On some bright essence could I lean, and lull
Myself to immortality : I prest
Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest.
But, gentle Orb ! there came a nearer bliss—
My strange love came—Felicity's abyss !
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—
Yet not entirely ; no, thy starry sway
Has been an under-passion to this hour.
Now I begin to feel thine orby power
Is coming fresh upon me : O be kind,
Keep back thine influence, and do not blind
My sovereign vision.—Dearest love, forgive
That I can think away from thee and live !—
Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize
One thought beyond thine argent luxuries !
How far beyond !” At this a surpris'd start
Frosted the springing verdure of his heart ;
For as he lifted up his eyes to swear
How his own goddess was past all things fair,
He saw far in the concave green of the sea
An old man sitting calm and peacefully.
Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,
And his white hair was awful, and a mat
Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet ;
And, ample as the largest winding-sheet,
A cloak of blue wrapp'd up his aged bones,
O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest
groans
Of ambitious magic : every ocean-form
Was woven in with black distinctness ; storm,
And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar,

ENDYMION

Quicksand, and whirlpool, and deserted shore,
Were emblem'd in the woof; with every shape
That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and
cape.

The gulping whale was like a dot in the spell,
Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell
To its huge self; and the minutest fish
Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,
And show his little eye's anatomy.
Then there was pictur'd the regality
Of Neptune; and the sea nymphs round his
state,

In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.
Beside this old man lay a pearly wand,
And in his lap a book, the which he conn'd
So stedfastly, that the new denizen
Had time to keep him in amazed ken,
To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man rais'd his hoary head and saw
The wilder'd stranger—seeming not to see,
His features were so lifeless. Suddenly
He woke as from a trance; his snow-white
brows

Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs
Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,
Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,
Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.
Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil
Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage,
Who had not from mid-life to utmost age
Eas'd in one accent his o'er-burden'd soul,
Even to the trees. He rose: he grasp'd his
stole,

With convuls'd clenches waving it abroad,
And in a voice of solemn joy, that aw'd
Echo into oblivion, he said:—

“Thou art the man! Now shall I lay my
head

In peace upon my watery pillow: now
Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.
O Jove! I shall be young again, be young!
O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung
With new-born life! What shall I do? Where

When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe?—
I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen
Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten;

Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be,
That writhes about the roots of Sicily:
To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail,
And mount upon the snortings of a whale
To some black cloud; thence down I'll madly
sweep

On forked lightning, to the deepest deep,
Where through some sucking pool I will be
hurl'd

With rapture to the other side of the world!
O, I am full of gladness! Sisters three,
I bow full hearted to your old decree!
Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign,
For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine.
Thou art the man!” Endymion started back
Dismay'd; and, like a wretch from whom the
rack

Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony,
Mutter'd: “What lonely death am I to die
In this cold region? Will he let me freeze,
And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas?
Or will he touch me with his searing hand,
And leave a black memorial on the sand?
Or tear me piece-meal with a bony saw,
And keep me as a chosen food to draw
His magian fish through hated fire and flame?
O misery of hell! resistless, tame,
Am I to be burnt up? No, I will shout,
Until the gods through heaven's blue look
out! —

O Tartarus! but some few days ago
Her soft arms were entwining me, and on
Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves:
Her lips were all my own, and—ah, ripe sheaves
Of happiness! ye on the stubble droop,
But never may be garner'd. I must stoop
My head, and kiss death's foot. Love! love,
farewel!

Is there no hope from thee? This horrid spell
Would melt at thy sweet breath.—By Dian's
hind

Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind
I see thy streaming hair! and now, by Pan,
I care not for this old mysterious man!”

He spake, and walking to that aged form,
Look'd high defiance. Lo! his heart 'gan warm
With pity, for the grey-hair'd creature wept.
Had he then wrong'd a heart where sorrow kept?

JOHN KEATS

Had he, though blindly contumelious, brought
Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to human thought,
Convulsion to a mouth of many years?
He had in truth; and he was ripe for tears.
The penitent shower fell, as down he knelt
Before that care-worn sage, who trembling felt
About his large dark locks, and faltering spake:

"Arise, good youth, for sacred Phæbus'
sake!

I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel
A very brother's yearning for thee steal
Into mine own: for why? thou openest
The prison gates that have so long oppress
My weary watching. Though thou know'st
it not,

Thou art commission'd to this fated spot
For great enfranchisement. O weep no more;
I am a friend to love, to loves of yore:
Aye, hadst thou never lov'd an unknown power,
I had been grieving at this joyous hour.
But even now most miserable old,
I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold
Gave mighty pulses: in this tottering case
Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays
As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid,
For thou shalt hear this secret all display'd,
Now as we speed towards our joyous task."

So saying, this young soul in age's mask
Went forward with the Carian side by side:
Resuming quickly thus; while ocean's tide
Hung swollen at their backs, and jewel'd sands
Took silently their foot-prints.

"My soul stands

Now past the midway from mortality,
And so I can prepare without a sigh
To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain.
I was a fisher once, upon this main,
And my boat danc'd in every creek and bay;
Rough billows were my home by night and
day,—

The sea-gulls not more constant; for I had
No housing from the storm and tempests mad,
But hollow rocks,—and they were palaces
Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease:
Long years of misery have told me so.
Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago.

One thousand years!—Is it then possible
To look so plainly through them? to dispel
A thousand years with backward glance
sublime?

To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,
And one's own image from the bottom peep?
Yes: now I am no longer wretched thrall,
My long captivity and moanings all
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum,
The which I breathe away, and thronging come
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

"I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no
measures:

I was a lonely youth on desert shores.
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.
Dolphins were still my playmates; shapes un-
seen

Would let me feel their scales of gold and green,
Nor be my desolation; and, full oft,
When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft
Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe
To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe
My life away like a vast sponge of fate,
Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,
Has dived to its foundations, gulph'd it down,
And left me tossing safely. But the crown
Of all my life was utmost quietude:
More did I love to lie in cavern rude,
Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's
voice,

And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice!
There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer
My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear
The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery
steep,

Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep:
And never was a day of summer shine,
But I beheld its birth upon the brine:
For I would watch all night to see unfold
Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning
gold

Wide o'er the swelling streams: and constantly
At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,
My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.
The poor folk of the sea-country I blest

ENDYMION

With daily boon of fish most delicate :
They knew not whence this bounty, and elate
Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

"Why was I not contented? Wherefore
reach

At things which, but for thee, O Latmian!
Had been my dreary death? Fool! I began
To feel distemper'd longings: to desire
The utmost privilege that ocean's sire
Could grant in benediction: to be free
Of all his kingdom. Long in misery
I wasted, ere in one extremest fit
I plung'd for life or death. To interknit
One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff
Might seem a work of pain; so not enough
Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,
And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt
Whole days and days in sheer astonishment;
Forgetful utterly of self-intent;
Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.
Then, like a new sledg'd bird that first doth
show

His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,
I tried in fear the pinions of my will.
'Twas freedom! and at once I visited
The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.
No need to tell thee of them, for I see
That thou hast been a witness—it must be—
For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,
By the melancholy corners of that mouth.
So I will in my story straightway pass
To more immediate matter. Woe, alas!
That love should be my bane! Ay, Scylla
fair!

Why did poor Glaucus ever—ever dare
To sue thee to his heart? Kind stranger-
youth!

I lov'd her to the very white of truth,
And she would not conceive it. Timid thing!
She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing,
Round every isle, and point, and promontory,
From where large Hercules wound up his story
Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew
The more, the more I saw her dainty hue
Gleam delicately through the azure clear;
Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear;
And in that agony, across my grief
It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief—

Cruel enchantress! So above the water
I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus'
daughter.

Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon:—
It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon
Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

"When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower;
Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees,
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh
trees.

How sweet, and sweeter! for I heard a lyre,
And over it a sighing voice expire.
It ceas'd—I caught light footsteps; and anon
The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon
Push'd through a screen of roses.—Starry Jove!
With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she
wove

A net whose thralldom was more bliss than all
The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall
The dew of her rich speech: 'Ah! Art awake?
O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake!
I am so oppress'd with joy! Why, I have shed
An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead;
And now I find thee living, I will pour
From these devoted eyes their silver store,
Until exhausted of the latest drop,
So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop
Here, that I too may live: but if beyond
Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond
Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme;
If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream;
If smiles, if dimples, tongues for arduous mute,
Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,
O let me pluck it for thee.' Thus she link'd
Her charming syllables, till indistinct
Their music came to my o'er sweeten'd soul;
And then she hover'd over me, and stole
So near, that if no nearer it had been
This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen.

"Young man of Latmos! thus particular
Am I, that thou may'st plainly see how far
This fierce temptation went: and thou may'st
not
Exclaim, How then, was Scylla quite forgot?

"Who could resist? Who in this universe?
She did so breathe ambrosia; so immerse

JOHN KEATS

My fine existence in a golden clime.
 She took me like a child of suckling time,
 And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd,
 The current of my former life was stemm'd,
 And to this arbitrary queen of sense
 I bow'd a tranced vassal: nor would thence
 Have mov'd, even though Amphion's harp had
 woo'd

Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude.
 For as Apollo each eve doth devise
 A new appareling for western skies;
 So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour
 Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.
 And I was free of haunts umbrageous;
 Could wander in the mazy forest-house
 Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer,
 And birds from coverts innermost and drear
 Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow—
 To me new born delights!

"Now let me borrow,
 For moments few, a temperament as stern
 As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn
 These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell
 How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

"One morn she left me sleeping: half awake
 I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake
 My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts;
 But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts
 Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,
 That out I ran and search'd the forest o'er.
 Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom
 Damp awe assail'd me; for there 'gan to boom
 A sound of moan, an agony of sound,
 Sepulchral from the distance all around.
 Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and
 rumbled
 That fierce complain to silence: while I
 stumbled
 Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd.
 I came to a dark valley.—Groanings swell'd
 Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,
 The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue,
 That glar'd before me through a thorny brake.
 This fire, like the eye of gordian snake,
 Bewitch'd me towards; and I soon was near
 A sight too fearful for the feel of fear:
 In thicket hid I curs'd the haggard scene—

The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,
 Seated upon an uptorn forest root;
 And all around her shapes, wizard and brute,
 Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpentine,
 Showing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting!
 O such deformities! Old Charon's self,
 Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,
 And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian
 It could not be so phantasied. Fierce, wan,
 And tyrannizing was the lady's look,
 As over them a gnarled staff she shook.
 Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out,
 And from a basket emptied to the rout
 Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick
 And roar'd for more; with many a hungry lick
 About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,
 Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,
 And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial:
 Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial
 Was sharpening for their pitiable bones.
 She lifted up the charm: appealing groans
 From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear
 In vain; remorseless as an infant's bier
 She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil.
 Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,
 Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,
 Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage;
 Until their griev'd bodies 'gan to bloat
 And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat:
 Then was appalling silence: then a sight
 More wildering than all that hoarse affright;
 For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writhen,
 Went through the dismal air like one huge
 Python
 Antagonizing Boreas,—and so vanish'd.
 Yet there was not a breath of wind: she
 banish'd
 These phantoms with a nod. Lo! from the
 dark
 Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs
 stark,
 With dancing and loud revelry,—and went
 Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.—
 Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd
 Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud
 In human accent: 'Potent goddess! chief
 Of pains resistless! make my being brief,
 Or let me from this heavy prison fly:
 Or give me to the air, or let me die!

ENDYMION

I sue not for my happy crown again ;
 I sue not for my phalanx on the plain ;
 I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife ;
 I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,
 My children fair, my lovely girls and boys !
 I will forget them ; I will pass these joys ;
 Ask nought so heavenward, so too—too high :
 Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,
 Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh,
 From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,
 And merely given to the cold bleak air.
 Have mercy, Goddess ! Circe, feel my prayer !

“That curst magician's name fell icy numb
 Upon my wild conjecturing : truth had come
 Naked and sabre-like against my heart.
 I saw a fury whetting a death-dart ;
 And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,
 Fainted away in that dark lair of night.
 Think, my deliverer, how desolate
 My waking must have been ! disgust, and hate,
 And terrors manifold divided me
 A spoil amongst them. I prepar'd to flee
 Into the dungeon core of that wild wood :
 I fled three days—when lo ! before me stood
 Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now,
 A clammy dew is beading on my brow,
 At mere remembering her pale laugh, and
 curse.

‘Ha ! ha ! Sir Dainty ! there must be a nurse
 Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,
 To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee : yes,
 I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch :
 My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.
 So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies
 Unheard of yet : and it shall still its cries
 Upon some breast more lily-feminine.
 Oh, no—it shall not pine, and pine, and pine
 More than one pretty, trifling thousand years ;
 And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears
 Cut short its immortality. Sea-flirt !
 Young dove of the waters ! truly I'll not hurt
 One hair of thine : see how I weep and sigh,
 That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.
 And must we part ? Ah, yes, it must be so.
 Yet ~~ere~~ thou leavest me in utter woe,
 Let me sob over thee my last adieus,
 And speak a blessing : Mark me ! Thou hast
 thews

Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race :
 But such a love is mine, that here I chase
 Eternally away from thee all bloom
 Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb.
 Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast ;
 And there, ere many days be overpast,
 Disabled age shall seize thee ; and even then
 Thou shalt not go the way of aged men ;
 But live and wither, cripple and still breathe
 Ten hundred years : which gone, I then bequeath
 Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.
 Adieu, sweet love, adieu !—As shot stars fall,
 She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung
 And poisoned was my spirit : despair sung
 A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.
 A hand was at my shoulder to compel
 My sullen steps ; another 'fore my eyes
 Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise
 Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam
 I found me ; by my fresh, my native home.
 Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,
 Came salutary as I waded in ;
 And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave
 Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drove
 Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd
 Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow
 drain'd.

“Young lover, I must weep—such hellish spite
 With dry cheek who can tell ? While thus my
 might
 Proving upon this element, dismay'd,
 Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid ;
 I look'd—'twas Scylla ! Cursed, cursed Circe !
 O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy ?
 Could not thy harshest vengeance be content,
 But thou must nip this tender innocent
 Because I lov'd her ?—Cold, O cold indeed
 Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed
 The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was
 I clung about her waist, nor ceas'd to pass
 Fleet as an arrow through unfathom'd brine,
 Until there shone a fabric crystalline,
 Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.
 Headlong I darted ; at one eager swirl
 Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold !
 'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold ;
 And all around—But wherefore this to thee
 Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see ?—

JOHN KEATS

I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled.
My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread
Met palsy half way : soon these limbs became
Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and
lame.

"Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space,
Without one hope, without one faintest trace
Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble
Of colour'd phantasy ; for I fear 'twould trouble
Thy brain to loss of reason : and next tell
How a restoring chance came down to quell
One half of the witch in me.

"On a day,
Sitting upon a rock above the spray,
I saw grow up from the horizon's brink
A gallant vessel : soon she seem'd to sink
Away from me again, as though her course
Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force—
So vanish'd : and not long, before arose
Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.
Old Æolus would stifle his mad spleen,
But could not : therefore all the billows green
Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds.
The tempest came : I saw that vessel's shrouds
In perilous bustle ; while upon the deck
Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck ;
The final gulphing ; the poor struggling souls :
I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.
O they had all been sav'd but crazed old
Annull'd my vigorous cravings : and thus quell'd
And curb'd, think on't, O Latmian ! did I sit
Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit
Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had
gone,
By one and one, to pale oblivion ;
And I was gazing on the surges prone,
With many a scalding tear and many a groan,
When at my feet emerg'd an old man's hand,
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand.
I knelt with pain—reached out my hand—had
grasp'd
These treasures—touch'd the knuckles—they
unclasp'd—
I caught a finger : but the downward weight
O'erpowered me—it sank. Then 'gan abate
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom
outburst

The comfortable sun. I was athirst
To search the book, and in the warming air
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on
My soul page after page, till well-nigh won
Into forgetfulness ; when, stupefied,
I read these words, and read again, and tried
My eyes against the heavens, and read again.
O what a load of misery and pain
Each Atlas-line bore off!—a shine of hope
Came gold around me, cheering me to cope
Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend !
For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

*"In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,
Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch
His loath'd existence through ten centuries,
And then to die alone. Who can devise
A total opposition ? No one. So
One million times ocean must ebb and flow,
And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,
These things accomplish'd :—If he utterly
Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds
The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds ;
If he explores all forms and substances
Straight homeward to their symbol-essences ;
He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,
He must pursue this task of joy and grief
Most piously ;—all lovers tempest-tost,
And in the savage overwhelming lost,
He shall deposit side by side, until
Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil :
Which done, and all these labours ripened,
A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led,
Shall stand before him ; whom he shall direct
How to consummate all. The youth elect
Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd."*

"Then," cried the young Endymion, over-
joy'd,
"We are twin brothers in this destiny !
Say, I intreat thee, what achievement high
Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd.
What ! if from thee my wandering feet had
swerv'd,
Had we both perish'd ?"—"Look !" the sage
replied,
"Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the
tide,

ENDYMION

Of divers brilliances? 'tis the edifice
I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies;
And where I have enshrined piously
All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to die
Throughout my bondage." Thus discoursing, on
They went till unobscur'd the porches shone;
Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd
straight.

Sure never since king Neptune held his state
Was seen such wonder underneath the stars.
Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars
Has legion'd all his battle; and behold
How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold
His even breast: see, many steeled squares,
And rigid ranks of iron—whence who dares
One step? Imagine further, line by line,
These warrior thousands on the field supine:—
So in that crystal place, in silent rows,
Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.—
The stranger from the mountains, breathless,
trac'd

Such thousands of shut eyes in order plac'd;
Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips
All ruddy,—for here death no blossom nips.
He mark'd their brows and foreheads; saw their
hair
Put sleekly on one side with nicest care;
And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,
Put cross-wise to its heart.

"Let us commence,"
Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy, "even
now."

He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough,
Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,
Uttering the while some mumblings funeral.
He tore it into pieces small as snow
That drifts unfeather'd when bleak northerns
blow;

And having done it, took his dark blue cloak
And bound it round Endymion: then struck
His wand against the empty air times nine.—
"What more there is to do, young man, is
thine:

But first a little patience; first undo
This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.
Ah, gentle! 'tis as weak as spider's skein;
And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done
so clean?

A power overshadows thee! O, brave!
The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.
Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me,
Nor mark'd with any sign or character—
Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's
sake!

Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break
This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal."

'Twas done: and straight with sudden swell
and fall

Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and sigh'd
A lullaby to silence.—"Youth! now strew
These minced leaves on me, and passing through
Those files of dead, scatter the same around,
And thou wilt see the issue."—Mid the sound
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,
And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.
How lightning-swift the change! a youthful
wight

Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,
Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force
Press'd its cold hand, and wept,—and Scylla
sigh'd!

Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied—
The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,
And onward went upon his high employ,
Showering those powerful fragments on the
dead.

And, as he pass'd, each lifted up his head,
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
Death felt it to his inwards: 'twas too much:
Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.
The Latmian persever'd along, and thus
All were re-animated. There arose
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes
Of gladness in the air—while many, who
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
Sprang to each other madly; and the rest
Felt a high certainty of being blest.
They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment
Grew drunken, and would have its head and
bent.

Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full
showers

JOHN KEATS

Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine
Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out.
Speechless they eyed each other, and about
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,
Distracted with the richest overflow
Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.

——“ Away ! ”

Shouted the new born god ; “ Follow, and pay
Our piety to Neptunus supreme ! ”—
Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,
They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,
Through portal columns of a giant size,
Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.
Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd,
Down marble steps ; pouring as easily
As hour-glass sand,—and fast, as you might see
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,
Just within ken, they saw descending thick
Another multitude. Whereat more quick
Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,
And of those numbers every eye was wet ;
For each their old love found. A murmuring
rose,
Like what was never heard in all the throes
Of wind and waters : 'tis past human wit
To tell ; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host
Mov'd on for many a league ; and gain'd, and
lost
Huge sea-marks ; vanward swelling in array,
And from the rear diminishing away,—
Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cried,
“ Behold ! behold, the palace of his pride !
God Neptune's palaces ! ” With noise in-
creas'd,
They shoulder'd on towards that brightening
east.
At every onward step proud domes arose
In prospect,—diamond gleams, and golden
glows
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling.
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,

Still onward ; still the splendour gradual swell'd.
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts
Each gazer drank ; and deeper drank more
near :

For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere
As marble was there lavish, to the vast
Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd,
Even for common bulk, those olden three,
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow
Of Iris, when unfading it doth shew
Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch
Through which this Paphian army took its
march,

Into the outer courts of Neptune's state :
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,
To which the leaders sped ; but not half raught
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,
And made those dazzled thousands veil their
eyes

Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze,
And then, behold ! large Neptune on his throne
Of emerald deep : yet not exalt alone ;
At his right hand stood winged Love, and on
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,
So wide was Neptune's hall : and as the blue
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew
Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,
Aw'd from the throne aloof ;—and when storm-
rent

Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air ;
But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden everywhere,
Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering
Death to a human eye : for there did spring
From natural west, and east, and south, and
north,

A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head.
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread
As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe
Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through

ENDYMION

The delicatest air : air verily,
But for the portraiture of clouds and sky :
This palace floor breath-air,—but for the amaze
Of deep-seen wonders motionless,—and blaze
Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,
Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams

Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang ;
The Nereids danc'd ; the Syrens faintly sang ;
And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping
head.

Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed
On all the multitude a nectarous dew.
The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew
Fair Scylla and her guides to conference ;
And when they reach'd the throned eminence
She kist the sea-nymph's cheek,—who sat her
down

A toying with the doves. Then,—“ Mighty
crown

And sceptre of this kingdom ! ” Venus said,
“ Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid :
Behold ! ”—Two copious tear-drops instant fell
From the God's large eyes ; he smil'd delectable,
And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.—

“ Endymion ! Ah ! still wandering in the bands
Of love ? Now this is cruel. Since the hour
I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power
Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet
Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net ?
A little patience, youth ! 'twill not be long,
Or I am skillless quite : an idle tongue,
A humid eye, and steps luxurious,
Where these are new and strange, are ominous.
Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,
When others were all blind : and were I given
To utter secrets, haply I might say
Some pleasant words :—but Love will have his
day.

So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,
Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,
Visit thou my Cythera : thou wilt find
Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind ;
And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have
done,
All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son ! ”—
Thus the fair goddess : While Endymion
Knelt to receive those accents halcyon.

Meantime a glorious revelry began
Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran
In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd ;
And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless,
pleach'd
New growth about each shell and pendent
lyre ;
The which, in disentangling for their fire,
Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture
For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure,
Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the
throng
Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song,
And garlanding grew wild ; and pleasure reign'd.
In harmless tendril they each other chain'd,
And strove who should be smother'd deepest in
Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin

For one so weak to venture his poor verse
In such a place as this. O do not curse,
High Muses ! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending
Of dulcet instruments came charmingly ;
And then a hymn. :

“ King of the stormy sea !
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
Of elements ! Eternally before
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn
rock,
At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
All mountain-rivers, lost in the wide home
Of thy capacious bosom, ever flow.
Thou frownest, and old Æolus thy foe
Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint
When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam
Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team
Guiphs in the morning light, and scuds along
To bring thee nearer to that golden song
Apollo singeth, while his chariot
Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not
For scenes like this : an empire stern hast thou ;
And it hath furrow'd that large front : yet now,
As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit
To blend and interknit

JOHN KEATS

Subdued majesty with this glad time.
O shell-borne King sublime!
We lay our hearts before thee evermore—
We sing, and we adore!

“Breathe softly, flutes;
Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes;
Nor be the trumpet heard! O vain, O vain;
Not flowers budding in an April rain,
Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow,—
No, nor the Æolian twang of Love's own bow,
Can mingle music fit for the soft ear
Of goddess Cytherea!
Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes
On our souls' sacrifice.

“Bright-winged Child!
Who has another care when thou hast smil'd?
Unfortunates on earth, we see at last
All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast
Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.
O sweetest essence! sweetest of all minions!
God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair,
And panting bosoms bare!
Dear unseen light in darkness! eclipser
Of light in light! delicious poisoner!
Thy venom'd goblet will be quaff until
We fill—we fill!
And by thy Mother's lips——”

Was heard no more

For clamour, when the golden palace door
Opened again, and from without, in shone
A new magnificence. On oozy throne
Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,
To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,
Before he went into his quiet cave
To muse for ever—Then a lucid wave,
Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,
Afloat and pillowing up the majesty
Of Doris, and the Ægean seer, her spouse—
Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,
Theban Amphion leaning on his lute:
His fingers went across it—All were mute
To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,
And Thetis pearly too.—

The palace whirls

Around giddy Endymion; seeing he

Was there far strayed from mortality.
He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain;
Imagination gave a dizzier pain.
“O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay!
Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away!
I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing—”
At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring
Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife
To usher back his spirit into life:
But still he slept. At last they interwove
Their cradling arms, and purpos'd to convey
Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the pitying
crowd,
To his inward senses these words spake aloud;
Written in star-light on the dark above:
Dearest Endymion! my entire love!
How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done—
Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.
Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch
Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch
Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!

The youth at once arose: a placid lake
Came quiet to his eyes; and forest green,
Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,
Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast.
How happy once again in grassy nest!

BOOK IV

MUSE of my native land! loftiest Muse!
O first-born on the mountains! by
the hues
Of heaven on the spiritual air begot:
Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,
While yet our England was a wolfish den;
Before our forests heard the talk of men;
Before the first of Druids was a child;—
Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild
Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.
There came an eastern voice of solemn mood:—
Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the
Nine,
Apollo's garland:—yet didst thou divine
Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain,
“Come hither, Sister of the Island!” Plain
Spake fair Ausonia; and once more she spake

ENDYMION

A higher summons:—still didst thou betake
Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won
A full accomplishment! The thing is done,
Which undone, these our latter days had risen
On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st
what prison,
Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and
frets
Our spirit's wings: despondency besets
Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn
Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.
Long have I said, how happy he who thrives
To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,
And could not pray:—nor could I now—so on
I move to the end in lowliness of heart.—

“Ah, woe is me! that I should fondly part
From my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid!
Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads
bade
Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields!
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour:
Yet I would have, great gods! but one short
hour
Of native air—let me but die at home.”

Endymion to heaven's airy dome
Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,
When these words reach'd him. Whereupon
he bows
His head through thorny-green entanglement
Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,
Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

“Is no one near to help me? No fair dawn
Of life from charitable voice? No sweet saying
To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing?
No hand to toy with mine? No lips so sweet
That I may worship them? No eyelids meet
To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes
Redemption sparkles!—I am sad and lost.”

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been
tost
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear

A woman's sigh alone and in distress?
See not her charms! Is Phœbe passionless?
Phœbe is fairer far—O gaze no more:—
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,
Behold her panting in the forest grass!
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass
For tenderness the arms so idly lain
Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain,
To see such lovely eyes in swimming search
After some warm delight, that seems to perch
Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond
Their upper lids?—Hist!

“O for Hermes' wand,
To touch this flower into human shape!
That woodland Hyacinthus could escape
From his green prison, and here kneeling down
Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown!
Ah me, how could I love!—My soul doth melt
For the unhappy youth—Love! I have felt
So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender
To what my own full thoughts had made too
tender,

That but for tears my life had fled away!—
Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,
And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
There is no lightning, no authentic dew
But in the eye of love: there's not a sound,
Melodious howsoever, can confound
The heavens and earth in one to such a death
As doth the voice of love: there's not a breath
Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
Of passion from the heart!”—

Upon a bough
He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now
Thirst for another love: O impious,
That he can even dream upon it thus!—
Thought he, “Why am I not as are the dead,
Since to a woe like this I have been led
Through the dark earth, and through the won-
drous sea?
Goddess! I love thee not the less: from thee
By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no—
While the great waters are at ebb and flow.—
I have a triple soul! O fond pretence—
For both, for both my love is so immense,
I feel my heart is cut for them in twain.”

JOHN KEATS

And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain.
 The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see
 Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.
 He sprang from his green covert: there she lay,
 Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay;
 With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes
 Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries.
 "Fair damsel, pity me! forgive that I
 Thus violate thy bower's sanctity!
 O pardon me, for I am full of grief—
 Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!
 Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
 I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith
 Thou art my executioner, and I feel
 Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
 Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
 And all my story that much passion slew me;
 Do smile upon the evening of my days:
 And, for my tortur'd brain begins to craze,
 Be thou my nurse; and let me understand
 How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.—
 Dost weep for me? Then should I be content.
 Scowl on, ye fates! until the firmament
 Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth
 Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth
 Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst
 To meet oblivion."—As her heart would burst
 The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied:
 "Why must such desolation betide
 As that thou speakest of? Are not these green
 nooks
 Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks
 Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,
 Schooling its half-fledged little ones to brush
 About the dewy forest, whisper tales?—
 Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold
 snails
 Will slime the rose to-night. Though if thou
 wilt,
 Methinks 'twould be a guilt—a very guilt—
 Not to companion thee, and sigh away
 The light—the dusk—the dark—till break of
 day!"
 "Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past:
 I love thee! and my days can never last.
 That I may pass in patience still speak:
 Let me have music dying, and I seek
 No more delight—I bid adieu to all.
 Didst thou not after other climates call,

And murmur about Indian streams?"—Then she,
 Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
 For pity sang this roundelay——

"O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—
 To give maiden blushes
 To the white rose bushes?
 Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

"O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—
 To give the glow-worm light?
 Or, on a moonless night,
 To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

"O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—
 To give at evening pale
 Unto the nightingale,
 That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

"O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?—
 A lover would not tread
 A cowslip on the head,
 Though he should dance from eve till peep of
 day—
 Nor any drooping flower
 Held sacred for thy bower,
 Wherever he may sport himself and play.

"O Sorrow,
 I bade good-morrow,
 And thought to leave her far away behind;
 But cheerly, cheerly,
 She loves me dearly;
 She is so constant to me, and so kind:
 I would deceive her
 And so leave her,
 But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
 I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide

ENDYMION

There was no one to ask me why I wept,—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

“Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

“And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
’Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
’Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,
To scare thee, Melancholy!
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon:—
I rush'd into the folly!

“Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough
white
For Venus' pearly bite:
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.

“Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence
came ye!
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
Your lutes, and gentler fate?—
‘We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
Conquering!
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms
wide:—

Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy!’

“Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came
ye!
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?—
‘For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
And cold mushrooms;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
Great God of breathless cups and chirping
mirth!—
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our mad minstrelsy!’

“Over wide streams and mountains great we
went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
With Asian elephants:
Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.

“Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains;
A three days' journey in a moment done;
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn.

“I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine-wreath crown!
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring!
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
Old Tartary the fierce!
The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
And all his priesthood moans;

JOHN KEATS

Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.—
 Into these regions came I following him,
 Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim
 To stray away into these forests drear
 Alone, without a peer:
 And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

 "Young stranger!
 I've been a ranger
 In search of pleasure throughout every clime:
 Alas, 'tis not for me!
 Bewitch'd I sure must be,
 To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

 "Come then, Sorrow!
 Sweetest Sorrow!
 Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
 I thought to leave thee
 And deceive thee,
 But now of all the world I love thee best.

 "There is not one,
 No, no, not one
 But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;
 Thou art her mother,
 And her brother,
 Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade."

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
 And look, quite dead to every worldly thing!
 Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her;
 And listened to the wind that now did stir
 About the crisped oaks full drearily,
 Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
 Remember'd from its velvet summer song.
 At last he said: "Poor lady, how thus long
 Have I been able to endure that voice?
 Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;
 I must be thy sad servant evermore:
 I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
 Alas, I must not think—by Phœbe, no!
 Let me not think, soft Angel! shall it be so?
 Say, beautifullest, shall I never think?
 O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink
 Of recollection! make my watchful care
 Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair!
 Do gently murder half my soul, and I
 Shall feel the other half so utterly!—
 I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth;

O let it blush so ever! let it soothe
 My madness! let it mantle rosy-warm
 With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.—
 This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is;
 And this is sure thine other softling—this
 Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near!
 Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear!
 And whisper one sweet word that I may know
 This is this world—sweet dewy blossom!"—

Woe!

Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?—
 Even these words went echoing dismally
 Through the wide forest—a most fearful tone,
 Like one repenting in his latest moan;
 And while it died away a shade pass'd by,
 As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly
 Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves
 sleek forth

Their timid necks and tremble; so these both
 Leant to each other trembling, and sat so
 Waiting for some destruction—when lo,
 Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime
 Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time
 Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he
 dropt

Towards the ground; but rested not, nor stopt
 One moment from his home: only the sword
 He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward
 Swifter than sight was gone—even before
 The teeming earth a sudden witness bore
 Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear
 Above the crystal circlings white and clear;
 And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise,
 How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—
 So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black,
 Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.
 The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame
 On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame
 The other's fierceness. Through the air they
 flew,

High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
 Exhal'd to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone,
 Far from the earth away—unseen, alone,
 Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,
 The buoyant life of song can floating be
 Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.—
 Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd?
 This is the giddy air, and I must spread
 Wide pinions to keep here; nor do I dread

ENDYMION

Of height, or depth, or width, or any chance
Precipitous: I have beneath my glance
Those towering horses and their mournful
freight.

Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await
Fearless for power of thought, without thine
aid?—

There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade
From some approaching wonder, and behold
Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils
bold

Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,
Dying to embers from their native fire!

There curl'd a purple mist around them;
soon,

It seem'd as when around the pale new moon
Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping
willow:

'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on
pillow.

For the first time, since he came nigh dead born
From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn
Had he left more forlorn; for the first time,
He felt aloof the day and morning's prime—
Because into his depth Cimmerian

There came a dream, showing how a young
man,

Ere a lean bat could plump its wintery skin,
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win
An immortality, and how espouse
Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house.
Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate,
That he might at the threshold one hour wait
To hear the marriage melodies, and then
Sink downward to his dusky cave again.

His litter of smooth semiluculent mist,
Diversely ting'd with rose and amethyst,
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought;
And scarcely for one moment could he caught
His sluggish form reposing motionless.

Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress
Of vision search'd for him, as one would look
Athwart the sallows of a river nook

To catch a glance at silver throated eels,—
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop
Their full-veined ears, nostrils blood wide, and
stop;

Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,—
And on those pinions, level in mid air,
Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle
Upon a calm sea drifting: and meanwhile
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold! he
walks

On heaven's pavement; brotherly he talks
To divine powers: from his hand full fain
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain:
He tries the nerve of Phœbus' golden bow,
And asketh where the golden apples grow:
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield
A Jovian thunderbolt: arch Hebe brings
A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings
And tantalizes long; at last he drinks,
And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,
Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand.
He blows a bugle,—an ethereal band
Are visible above: the Seasons four,—
Green-kyrtled Spring, flush Summer, golden
store

In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,
Join dance with shadowy Hours; while still the
blast,

In swells unmitigated, still doth last
To sway their floating morris. "Whose is
this?"

Whose bugle?" he inquires; they smile—"O
Dis!

Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know
Its mistress' lips? Not thou?—'Tis Dian's: lo!
She rises crescented!" He looks, 'tis she,
His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;
Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring
Towards her, and awakes—and, strange, o'er-
head,

Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,
Beheld awake his very dream: the gods
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods;
And Phœbe bends towards him crescented.
O state perplexing! On the pinion bed,

JOHN KEATS

Too well awake, he feels the panting side
Of his delicious lady. He who died
For soaring too audacious in the sun,
Where that same treacherous wax began to run,
Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion.
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,
To that fair shadow'd passion puls'd its way—
Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a day!
So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow,
He could not help but kiss her: then he grew
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save
Young Phœbe's, golden hair'd; and so 'gan crave
Forgiveness: yet he turn'd once more to look
At the sweet sleeper,—all his soul was shook,—
She press'd his hand in slumber; so once more
He could not help but kiss her and adore.
At this the shadow wept, melting away.
The Latmian started up: "Bright goddess,
stay!

Search my most hidden breast! By truth's
own tongue,
I have no dædale heart: why is it wrung
To desperation? Is there nought for me,
Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?"

These words awoke the stranger of dark
tresses:
Her dawning love-look rapt Endymion blesses
With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawned from under-
neath.
"Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe
This murky phantasm! thou contented seem'st
Pillow'd in lovely idleness, nor dream'st
What horrors may discomfort thee and me.
Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart-
treachery!—
Yet did she merely weep—her gentle soul
Hath no revenge in it: as it is whole
In tenderness, would I were whole in love!
Can I prize thee, fair maid, all price above,
Even when I feel as true as innocence?
I do, I do.—What is this soul then? Whence
Came it? It does not seem my own, and I
Have no self-passion or identity.
Some fearful end must be: where, where is it?
By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit
Alone about the dark—Forgive me, sweet:
Shall we away?" He rous'd the steeds: they
beat

Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,
Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning
slow,
And Vesper, risen star, began to throe
In the dusk heavens silverly, when they
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange—
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof
Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,
So witless of their doom, that verily
'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to
see;
Whether they wept, or laugh'd, or griev'd, or
toy'd—
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloy'd.

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,
No bigger than an unobserved star,
Or tiny point of fairy scymetar;
Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.
Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,
While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd,
To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd
This beauty in its birth—Despair! despair!
He saw her body fading gaunt and spare
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her
wrist;
It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd,
And, horror! kiss'd his own—he was alone.
Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then
Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den,
Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the soul to wander in and trace
Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart:
And in these regions many a venom'd dart
At random flies; they are the proper home
Of every ill: the man is yet to come

ENDYMION

Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
But few have ever felt how calm and well
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
Their anguish does not sting; nor pleasure
pall:

Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
Yet all is still within and desolate.
Beset with painful gusts, within ye hear
No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier
The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none
Who strive therefore: on the sudden it is won.
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
Then it is free to him; and from an urn,
Still fed by melting ice, he take a draught—
Young Semele such richness never quaff
In her maternal longing. Happy gloom!
Dark paradise! where pale becomes the bloom
Of health by due; where silence dreariest
Is most articulate; where hopes infest;
Where those eyes are the brightest far that
keep

Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul!
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
Aye, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne
With dangerous speed: and so he did not mourn
Because he knew not whither he was going.
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.
They stung the feather'd horse: with fierce
alarm

He flapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd
A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,—
And silvery was its passing: voices sweet
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet
The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they,
While past the vision went in bright array.

“Who, who from Dian's feast would be away?
For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left? Who, who away would be
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity?
Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings

He leans away for highest heaven and sings,
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily!—

Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too!
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill

Your baskets high

With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme;
Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
All gather'd in the dewy morning: hie

Away! fly, fly!—

Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given
Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd
wings,

Two fan-like fountains,—thine illuminings

For Dian play:

Dissolve the frozen purity of air;
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare
Show cold through watery pinions; make more
bright

The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage
night:

Haste, haste away!—

Castor has tam'd the planet Lion, see!
And of the Bear has Pollux mastery:
A third is in the race! who is the third
Speeding away swift as the eagle bird?

The ramping Centaur!

The Lion's mane's on end: the Bear how fierce!
The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce
Some enemy: far forth his bow is bent
Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,

Pale unrelentor,

When he shall hear the wedding lutes a play-
ing.—

Andromeda! sweet woman! why delaying
So timidly among the stars: come hither!
Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow
whither

They all are going.

Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,
Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.
Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral:
Ye shall for ever live and love, for all

Thy tears are flowing.—

JOHN KEATS

By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo!—"

More

Endymion heard not: down his steed him bore,
Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.
"Alas!" said he, "were I but always borne
Through dangerous winds, had but my foot-
steps worn

A path in hell, for ever would I bless
Horrors which nourish an uneasiness
For my own sullen conquering: to him
Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is
dim,

Sorrow is but a shadow: now I see
The grass; I feel the solid ground—Ah, me!
It is thy voice—divinest! Where?—who? who
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew?

Behold upon this happy earth we are;
Let us ay love each other; let us fare
On forest-fruits, and never, never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below,
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny!
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.

Where didst thou melt to? By thee will I sit
For ever: let our fate stop here— a kid
I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid
Us live in peace, in love and peace among
His forest wildernesses. I have clung
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tie
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory
Has my own soul conspired: so my story
Will I to children utter, and repent.

There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian,
here,

Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
My life from too thin breathing: gone and
past

Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell!
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell

Of visionary seas! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.

On earth I may not love thee; and therefore
Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store
All through the teeming year: so thou wilt shine
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss!
My river-lily bud! one human kiss!

One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze,
Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,
And warm with dew at ooze from living blood!
Whither didst melt? Ah, what of that!—all
good

We'll talk about—no more of dreaming.—Now,
Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were
none;

And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?

O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place;
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd:

For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,
And by another, in deep dell below,

See, through the trees, a little river go
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.

Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,
And sorrel untorn by the dew-claw'd stag:

Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,
When it shall please thee in our quiet home
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak;
Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—

For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill
With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's
barn.

Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.
Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine,
And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.

ENDYMION

I will entice this crystal rill to trace
 Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.
 I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire;
 And to God Phœbus, for a golden lyre;
 To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear;
 To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear,
 That I may see thy beauty through the night;
 To Flora, and a nightingale shall light
 Tame on thy finger; to the River-gods,
 And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods
 Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.
 Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness!
 Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be
 'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to
 thee:
 Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak
 Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,
 Trembling or steadfastness to this same voice,
 And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice:
 And that affectionate light, those diamond things,
 Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl
 springs,
 Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
 Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure?
 O that I could not doubt!"

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear
 His briar'd path to some tranquillity.
 It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,
 And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow;
 Answering thus, just as the golden morrow
 Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east:
 "O that the flutter of this heart had ceas'd,
 Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away.
 Young feather'd tyrant! by a swift decay
 Wilt thou devote this body to the earth:
 And I do think that at my very birth
 I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly;
 For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,
 With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven.
 Art thou not cruel? Ever have I striven
 To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do!
 When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew
 Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave
 To the void air, bidding them find out love:
 But when I came to feel how far above
 All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,
 All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good,

Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,—
 Even then, that moment, at the thought of this,
 Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,
 And languish'd there three days. Ye milder
 bowers,
 Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe
 Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave
 With my own fancies, garlands of sweet life,
 Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife!
 I may not be thy love: I am forbidden—
 Indeed I am—thwarted, affrighted, chidden,
 By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.
 Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went: hence-
 forth
 Ask me no more! I may not utter it,
 Nor may I be thy love. We might commit
 Ourselves at once to vengeance; we might die;
 We might embrace and die: voluptuous thought!
 Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught
 In trammels of perverse deliciousness.
 No, no, that shall not be: thee will I bless,
 And bid a long adieu."

The Carian

No word return'd: both lovelorn, silent, wan,
 Into the vallies green together went.
 Far wandering, they were perforce content
 To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree;
 Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily
 Por'd on its hazle cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves
 Me to behold thee thus in last extreme:
 Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem
 Truth the best music in a first-born song.
 Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long,
 And thou shalt aid—hast thou not aided me?
 Yes, moonlight Emperor! felicity
 Has been thy meed for many thousand years;
 Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,
 Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester;—
 Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir

His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small
 pulse
 Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls
 Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays
 Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.

JOHN KEATS,

A little onward ran the very stream
 By which he took his first soft poppy dream ;
 And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant
 A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent
 His skill in little stars. The teeming tree
 Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery,
 But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a
 slope
 Up which he had not fear'd the antelope ;
 And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade
 He had not with his tamed leopards play'd :
 Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,
 Fly in the air where his had never been—
 And yet he knew it not.

O treachery !
 Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye
 With all his sorrowing ? He sees her not.
 But who so stares on him ? His sister sure !
 Peona of the woods !—Can she endure—
 Impossible—how dearly they embrace !
 His lady smiles ; delight is in her face ;
 It is no treachery.

“ Dear brother mine !
 Endymion, weep not so ! ” Why shouldst thou
 pine
 When all great Latmos so exalt will be ?
 Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly ;
 And speak not one pale word, and sigh no
 more.
 Sure I will not believe thou hast such store
 Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.
 Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,
 Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.
 Be happy both of you ! for I will pull
 The flowers of autumn for your coronals.
 Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls ;
 And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame,
 Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame
 To see ye thus,—not very, very sad ?
 Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad :
 O feel as if it were a common day ;
 Free-voic'd as one who never was away.
 No tongue shall ask, whence come ye ? but ye
 shall
 Be gods of your own rest imperial.
 Not even I, for one whole month, will pry
 Into the hours that have pass'd us by,

Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.
 O Hermes ! on this very night will be
 A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light ;
 For the soothsayers old saw yesternight
 Good visions in the air,—whence will befall,
 As say these sages, health perpetual
 To shepherds and their flocks ; and further-
 more,

In Dian's face they read the gentle lore :
 Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.
 Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.
 Many upon thy death have ditties made ;
 And many, even now, their foreheads shade
 With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.
 New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,
 And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's
 brows.

Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse
 This wayward brother to his rightful joys !
 His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise
 His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,
 To lure—Endymion, dear brother, say
 What ails thee ? ” He could bear no more, and

so
 Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
 And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said :
 “ I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid !
 My only visitor ! not ignorant though,
 That those deceptions which for pleasure go
 'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be :
 But there are higher ones I may not see,
 If impiously an earthly realm I take.
 Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake
 Night after night, and day by day, until
 Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
 Let it content thee. Sister, seeing me
 More happy than betides mortality.
 A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,
 Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave
 Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.
 Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper
 well ;
 For to thy tongue will I all health confide.
 And, for my sake, let this young maid abide
 With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,
 Peona, mayst return to me. I own
 This may sound strangely : but when, dearest
 girl,
 Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl

. ENDYMION

Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair!

Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share
This sister's love with me?" Like one resign'd
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind
In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown:
"Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
Of jubilee to Dian:—truth I heard!
Well then, I see there is no little bird,
Tender soever, but is Jove's own care.
Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,
Behold I find it! so exalted too!
So after my own heart! I knew, I knew
There was a place untenanted in it:
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.
With sanest lips I vow me to the number
Of Dian's sisterhood; and, kind lady,
With thy good help, this very night shall see
My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create
His own particular fright, so these three felt:
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt
To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine
After a little sleep: or when in mine
Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends
Who know him not. Each diligently bends
Towards common thoughts and things for very
fear;

Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow
Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last
Endymion said: "Are not our fates all cast?
Why stand we here? Adieu, ye tender pair!
Adieu!" Whereat those maidens, with wild
stare,

Walk'd dizzily away. Pained and hot
His eyes went after them, until they got
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,
In one swift moment, would what then he saw
Engulph for ever. "Stay!" he cried, "ah,
stay!

Turn, damsels! hist! one word I have to say.
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.
It is a thing I dote on: so I'd fain,
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair
Into those holy groves, that silent are

Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon,
At vesper's earliest twinkle—they are gone—
But once, once, once again—" At this he press'd
His hands against his face, and then did rest
His head upon a mossy hillock green,
And so remain'd as he a corpse had been
All the long day; save when he scanty lifted
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
With the slow move of time,—sluggish and
weary

Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose,
And, slowly as that very river flows,
Walk'd towards the temple grove with this
lament:

"Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
Before the serene father of them all
Bows down his summer head below the west.
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,
But at the setting I must bid adieu
To her for the last time. Night will strew
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
Why, I have been & butterfly, a lord
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses;
My kingdom's at its death, and just it is
That I should die with it: so in all this
We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe,
What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe
I am but rightly serv'd." So saying, he
Tripp'd lightly on, in sort of deathful glee;
Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,
As though they jests had been; nor had he
done

His laugh at nature's holy countenance,
Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance,
And then his tongue with sober seemlied
Gave utterance as he enter'd: "Ha! I said,
King of the butterflies; but by this gloom,
And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,
This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,
And the Promethean clay by thief endued,
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed
Myself to things of light from infancy;
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,

JOHN KEATS

HYPERION

A FRAGMENT

BOOK I

Is sure enough to make a mortal man
Grow impious." So he inwardly began
On things for which no wording can be found ;
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd
Beyond the reach of music : for the choir
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar
Nor muffling thicket interpos'd to dull
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,
Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles.
He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,
Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight
By chilly finger'd spring. " Unhappy wight !
Endymion ! " said Peona, " we are here !
What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on
bier ? "

Then he embrac'd her, and his lady's hand
Press'd, saying : " Sister, I would have
command,

If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."
At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate
And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,
To Endymion's amaze : " By Cupid's dove,
And so thou shalt ! and by the lily truth
Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth ! "
And as she spake, into her face there came
Light, as reflected from a silver flame :
Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display
Full golden ; in her eyes a brighter day
Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld
Phœbe, his passion ! joyous she upheld
Her lucid bow, continuing thus : " Drear, drear
Has our delaying been ; but foolish fear
Withheld me first ; and then decrees of fate ;
And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for
change

Be spiritualiz'd. Peona, we shall range
These forests, and to thee they safe shall be
As was thy cradle ; hither shalt thou flee
To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia
bright

Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night :
Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown
Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.
She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,
They vanish'd far away !—Peona went
Home through the gloomy wood in wonder-
ment.

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of
morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair ;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade : the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unscptred ; and his realmless eyes were closed ;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the
Earth,

His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his
place ;

But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world ;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height : she would have
ta'en

Achilles by the hair and bent his neck ;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestal'd haply in a palace court,
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
But oh ! how unlike marble was that face :
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun ;

, HYPERION

As if the vanward clouds of evil days
 Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
 Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
 One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
 Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
 Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain :
 The other upon Saturn's bended neck
 She laid, and to the level of his ear
 Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
 In solemn tenour and deep organ tone :
 Some mourning words, which in our feeble
 tongue

Would come in these like accents ; O how frail
 To that large utterance of the early Gods !
 " Saturn, look up !—though wherefore, poor old
 King ?

I have no comfort for thee, no not one :
 I cannot say, ' O wherefore sleepest thou ? '
 For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
 Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God ;
 And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
 Has from thy sceptre pass'd ; and all the air
 Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
 Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
 Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house ;
 And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands
 Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
 O aching time ! O moments big as years !
 All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
 And press it so upon our weary griefs
 That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
 Saturn, sleep on :—O thoughtless, why did I
 Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude ?
 Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes ?
 Saturn, sleep on ! while at thy feet I weep."

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
 Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
 Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
 Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
 Save from one gradual solitary gust
 Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
 As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;
 So came these words and went ; the while in
 tears
 She touch'd her fair large forehead to the
 ground,
 Just where her falling hair might be outspread
 A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.

One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
 Her silver seasons four upon the night,
 And still these two were postured motionless,
 Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern ;
 The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
 And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet :
 Until at length old Saturn lifted up
 His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
 And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
 And that fair kneeling Goddess ; and then spake,
 As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
 Shook horrid with such aspen-malady :

" O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
 Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face ;
 Look up, and let me see our doom in it ;
 Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
 Is Saturn's ; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
 Of Saturn ; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
 Naked and bare of its great diadem,
 Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
 To make me desolate ? whence came the
 strength ?

How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
 While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous
 grasp ?

But it is so ; and I am smother'd up,
 And buried from all godlike exercise
 Of influence benign on planets pale,
 Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
 Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
 And all those acts which Deity supreme
 Doth ease its heart of love in.—I am gone
 Away from my own bosom : I have left
 My strong identity, my real self,
 Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
 Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea,
 search !

Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
 Upon all space : space starr'd, and lorn of light ;
 Space region'd with life-air ; and barren void ;
 Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.—
 Search, Thea, search ! and tell me, if thou seest
 A certain shape or shadow, making way
 With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
 A heaven he lost erewhile : it must—it must
 Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.
 Yes, there must be a golden victory ;
 There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets
 blown

JOHN KEATS

Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells: and there shall be
Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children; I will give command:
Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?"

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep;
A little time, and then again he snatch'd
Utterance thus.—"But cannot I create?
Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe,
To overbear and crumble this to nought?
Where is another chaos? Where?" — That
word

Found way into Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope.
As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

"This cheers our fallen house: come to our
friends,
O Saturn! come away, and give them heart;
I know the covert, for thence came I hither."
Thus brief; then with beseeching eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a
space.

He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way
Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were
shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe:
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,
And listened in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still
kept

His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;—
Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God; yet unsecure:

For as among us mortals omens drear
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
Not at 'dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated
screech,

Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp;
But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand
courts,

Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angrily: while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were
heard,

Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick:
And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions in close clusters stood,
Amaz'd and full of fear; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and
towers.

Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the
woods,

Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tube,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

, HYPERION

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath ;
 His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
 And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
 That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours
 And made their dove-wings tremble. On he
 flared,
 From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
 Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed
 light,
 And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
 Until he reach'd the great main cupola ;
 There standing fierce beneath, he stamp'd his
 • foot,
 And from the basements deep to the high
 towers
 Jarr'd his own golden region ; and before
 The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd,
 His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
 To this result : " O dreams of day and night !
 O monstrous forms ! O effigies of pain !
 O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom !
 O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools !
 Why do I know ye ? why have I seen ye ? why
 Is my eternal essence thus distraught
 To see and to behold these horrors new ?
 Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall ?
 Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
 This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
 This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
 These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
 Of all my lucent empire ? It is left
 Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
 The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry,
 I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
 Even here, into my centre of repose,
 The shady visions come to domineer,
 Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.—
 Fall !—No, by Tellus and her briny robes !
 Over the fiery frontier of my realms
 I will advance a terrible right arm
 Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
 And bid old Saturn take his throne again."—
 He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat
 Held struggle with his throat but came not
 forth ;
 For as in theatres of crowded men
 Hubbub increases more they call out " Hush !"
 So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
 Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold ;

And from the mirror'd level where he stood
 A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
 At this, through all his bulk an agony
 Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
 Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
 Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd
 From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled
 To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
 Before the dawn in season due should blush,
 He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy
 portals,
 Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
 Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.
 The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
 Each day from east to west the heavens
 through,
 Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds ;
 Nor therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
 But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
 Circles, and arcs, and broad-belted colure,
 Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling
 dark
 Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
 Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old
 Which sages and keen-ey'd astrologers
 Then living on the earth, with labouring
 thought
 Won from the gaze of many centuries :
 Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
 Of stone, or marble swart ; their import gone,
 Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this
 orb
 Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
 Ever exalted at the God's approach :
 And now, from forth the gloom their plumes
 immense
 Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were ;
 While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse,
 Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
 Fain would he have commanded, fain took
 throne
 And bid the day begin, if but for change.
 He might not :—No, though a primeval God :
 The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.
 Therefore the operations of the dawn
 Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
 Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
 Eager to sail their orb ; the porches wide
 Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night ;

JOHN KEATS

And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,
Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Cœlus, from the universal space,
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.
"O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
All unrevealed even to the powers
Which met at thy creating ; at whose joys
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence ;
And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
Distinct, and visible ; symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life
Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space :
Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest
child !

Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses !
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne !
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his
head !

Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom ? vague fear
there is :

For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
Divine ye were created, and divine
In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled :
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath ;
Actions of rage and passion ; even as
I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son !
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall !
Yet do thou strive ; as thou art capable,
As thou canst move about, an evident God ;
And canst oppose to each malignant hour
Ethereal presence :—I am but a voice ;
My life is but the life of winds and tides,
No more than winds and tides can I avail :—
But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
Of circumstance ; yea, seize the arrow's barb

Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth !
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse."—
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceas'd ; and still he kept them wide :
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

BOOK II

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide

Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears ; where their own
groans

They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that
seem'd

Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous
horns ;

And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled :
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath ;
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their
limbs

Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp'd and
screw'd ;

Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd

HYPERION

With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse.
 Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;
 Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered ;
 And many else were free to roam abroad,
 But for the main, here found they covert drear.
 Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
 Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque
 Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
 When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
 In dull November, and their chancel vault,
 The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
 Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
 Or word, or look, or action of despair.
 Creus was one ; his ponderous iron mace
 Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
 Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
 Iäpetus another ; in his grasp,
 A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbed tongue
 Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd
 length
 Dead ; and because the creature could not spit
 Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
 Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,
 As though in pain ; for still upon the flint
 He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
 And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
 Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
 Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
 Though feminine, than any of her sons :
 More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
 For she was prophesying of her glory ;
 And in her wide imagination stood
 Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
 By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
 Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
 So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
 Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
 Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelf,
 Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,
 Shadow'd Enceladus ; once tame and mild
 As grazing ox unworried in the meads ;
 Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,
 He meditated, plotted, and even now
 Was hurling mountains in that second war,
 Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods
 To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
 Not far hence Atlas ; and beside him prone
 Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd
 close

Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
 Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair.
 In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
 Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight ;
 No shape distinguishable, more than when
 Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the
 clouds :
 And many else whose names may not be told.
 For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
 Who shall delay her flight ? And she must
 chaunt
 Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
 With damp and slippery footing from a depth
 More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
 Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
 Till on the level height their steps found ease :
 Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
 Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
 And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face :
 There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God
 At war with all the frailty of grief,
 Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
 Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
 Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for
 Fate
 Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
 A disanointing poison : so that Thea,
 Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
 First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
 Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,
 When it is nighing to the mournful house
 Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise ;
 So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,
 Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
 But that he met Enceladus's eye,
 Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
 Came like an inspiration ; and he shouted,
 "Titans, behold your God !" at which some
 groan'd ;
 Some started on their feet ; some also shouted ;
 Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with rever-
 ence ;
 And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
 Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
 Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
 There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
 When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise

JOHN KEATS.

Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless
thought,

With thunder, and with music, and with pomp :
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines :
Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world,
No other sound succeeds ; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up—"Not in my own sad breast,
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
Not in the legends of the first of days,
Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
Which starry Uranus with finger bright
Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the
waves

Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom ;—
And the which book ye know I ever kept
For my firm-based footstool :—Ah, infirm !
Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,—
At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling
One against one, or two, or three, or all
Each several one against the other three,
As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
Drown both, and press them both against earth's
face,

Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
Unhinges the poor world ;—not in that strife,
Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,
And pore on Nature's universal scroll
Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods,
Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are
here !

O Titans, shall I say, 'Arise !'—Ye groan :
Shall I say 'Crouch !'—Ye groan. What can
I then ?

O Heaven wide ! O unseen parent dear !
What can I ? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
How we can war, how engine our great wrath !

O speak your council now, for Saturn's eat
Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,
Ponderest high and deep ; and in thy face
I see, astonied, that severe content
Which comes of thought and musing : give us
help !"

So ended Saturn ; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands. ' ,
"O ye, whom wrath consumes ! who, passion-
stung,

Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies !
Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop :
And in the proof much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
Hast sifted well the atom-universe ;
But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last ; it cannot be :
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
From chaos and parental darkness came
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and light, engendering
Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest :
Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous
realms.

Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis
pain ;

O folly ! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well !

HYPERION

As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
 Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once
 chiefs ;
 And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
 In form and shape compact and beautiful,
 In will, in action free, companionship,
 And thousand other signs of purer life ;
 So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
 A power more strong in beauty, born of us
 And fated to excel us, as we pass
 In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
 Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
 Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
 Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
 And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
 Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves?
 Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
 Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
 To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
 We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
 Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
 But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
 Above us in their beauty, and must reign
 In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
 That first in beauty should be first in might:
 Yea, by that law, another race may drive
 Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
 Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
 My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
 Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
 By noble winged creatures he hath made?
 I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
 With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
 That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
 To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
 And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
 Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
 Give consolation in this woe extreme.
 Receive the truth, and let it be your balm."

Whether through poz'd conviction, or disdain,
 They guarded silence, when Oceanus
 Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell?
 But so it was, none answer'd for a space,
 Save one whom none regarded, Clymene;
 And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd,
 With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
 Thus wording timidly among the fierce:
 "O Father, I am here the simplest voice,

And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
 And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
 There to remain for ever, as I fear:
 I would not bode of evil, if I thought
 So weak a creature could turn off the help
 Which by just right should come of mighty
 Gods;

Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
 Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
 And know that we had parted from all hope.
 I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
 Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
 Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
 Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief;
 Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth;
 So that I felt a movement in my heart
 To chide, and to reproach that solitude
 With songs of misery, music of our woes;
 And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
 And murmur'd into it, and made melody—
 O melody no more! for while I sang,
 And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
 The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
 Just opposite, an island of the sea,
 There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
 That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
 I threw my shell away upon the sand,
 And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
 With that new blissful golden melody.
 A living death was in each gush of sounds,
 Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
 That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
 Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their
 string:

And then another, then another strain,
 Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
 With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
 To hover round my head, and make me sick
 Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
 And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
 When, past all hindrance of my trembling
 hands,
 A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
 And still it cried, 'Apollo! young Apollo!
 The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!'
 I fled, it follow'd me, and cried 'Apollo!'
 O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
 Those pains of mine; O Saturn, hadst thou
 felt,

JOHN KEATS

Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard."

So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous
brook

That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea : but sea it met,
And shudder'd ; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath :
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He lean'd ; not rising, from supreme contempt.
" Or shall we listen to the over-wise,
Or to the over-foolish, Giant-Gods ?
Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,
Could agonise me more than baby-words
In midst of this dethronement horrible.
Speak ! roar ! shout ! yell ! ye sleepy Titans
all.

Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile ?
Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm ?
Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
Thy scalding in the seas ? What, have I rous'd
Your spleens with so few simple words as
these ?

O joy ! for now I see ye are not lost :
O joy ! for now I see a thousand eyes
Wide glaring for revenge !"—As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus :
" Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
And purge the ether of our enemies ;
How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
O let him feel the evil he hath done ;
For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
Much pain have I for more than loss of realms :
The days of peace and slumberous calm are
fled ;

Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
When all the fair Existences of heaven
Came open-eyed to guess what we would
speak :—

That was before our brows were taught to
frown,

Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds ;
That was before we knew the winged thing,
Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
Hyperion, lo ! his radiance is here !"

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern :
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented
streams :

And all the everlasting cataracts,
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion :—a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to
view

The misery his brilliance had betray'd
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East :
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
He utter'd, while his hands contemplative
He press'd together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light :
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood ; and, at their glare,
Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode

. HYPERION

To where he towered on his eminence.
There those four shouted forth old Saturn's
name;
Hyperion from the peak loud answered,
"Saturn!"

Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of
"Saturn!"

BOOK III

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazed were those Titans utterly.
O leave them, Muse! O leave them
to their woes;

For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire:
A solitary sorrow best befits
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute;
For lo! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue,
Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
And let the clouds of even and of morn
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills;
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,
Cold as a bubbling well; let faint-lipp'd shells,
On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn
Through all their labyrinths; and let the maid
Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surpris'd.
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the
shade:

Apollo is once more the golden theme!
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers?
Together had he left his mother fair
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wandered forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale.

The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the
isle

There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
While from beneath some cumbrous boughs
hard by

With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,
Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said:
"How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea?
Or hath that antique mien and robed form
Mov'd in these vales invisible till now?
Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping
o'er

The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
The rustle of those ample skirts about
These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.
Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before,
And their eternal calm, and all that face,
Or I have dreamed."—"Yes," said the supreme
shape,

"Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the
vast

Unwearied ear of the whole universe
Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
That thou shouldst weep, so gifted? Tell me,
youth,

What sorrow thou canst feel; for I am sad
When thou dost shed a tear; explain thy griefs
To one who in this lonely isle hath been
The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
From the young day when first thy infant hand
Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake

JOHN KEATS

Of loveliness new born."—Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat
Throbb'd with the syllables.—" Mnemosyne!
Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how;
Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest?
Why should I strive to show what from thy
lips

Would come no mystery? For me, dark,
dark,

And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes:
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
Until a melancholy numbs my limbs;
And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
Like one who once had wings.—O why should I
Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air
Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?
Goddess benign, point forth some unknown
thing:

Are there not other regions than this isle?
What are the stars? There is the sun, the
sun!

And the most patient brilliance of the moon!
And stars by thousands! Point me out the
way

To any one particular beauteous star,
And I will flit into it with my lyre,
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
I have heard the cloudy thunder: Where is
power?

Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
Makes this alarum in the elements,
While I here idle listen on the shores
In fearless yet in aching ignorance?
O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
That waileth every morn and eventide,
Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves!
Mute thou remainest—Mute! yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events,
rebellions,

Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
And deify me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal."—Thus the God,

While his enkindled eyes, with level glance'
Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept
Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
All the immortal fairness of his limbs;
Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life: so young Apollo anguish'd:
His very hair, his golden tresses fam'd
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length
Apollo shriek'd;—and lo! from all his limbs
Celestial * * * * *
* * * * *

THE FALL OF HYPERION

A DREAM

CANTO I

FANATICS have their dreams, wherewith
they weave
A paradise for a sect; the savage, too,
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at heaven; pity these have not
Traced upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
The shadows of melodious utterance.
But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,—
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable chain
And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
"Thou art no Poet—mayst not tell thy dreams?"
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath visions and would speak, if he had lov'd,
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
When this warm scribe, my hand, is in the grave.

Methought I stood where trees of every clime,
Palm, myrtle, oak, and sycamore, and beech,
With plantane, and spice-blossoms, made a
screen;

THE FALL OF HYPERION

In neighbourhood of fountains (by the noise
Soft-showering in mine ears), and, (by the touch
Of scent,) not far from roses. Turning round,
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof
Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger blooms,
Like floral censers, swinging light in air ;
Before its wreathed doorway, on a mound
Of moss, was spread a feast of summer fruits,
Which, nearer seen, seem'd refuse of a meal
By angel tasted or our Mother Eve ;
For empty shells were scatter'd on the grass,
And grape-stalks but half bare, and remnants
more,
Sweet-smelling, whose pure kinds I could not
know.

Still was more plenty than the fabled horn
Thrice emptied could pour forth, at banqueting
For Proserpine return'd to her own fields,
Where the white heifers low. And appetite
More yearning than on earth I ever felt,
Growing within, I ate deliciously ;
And, after not long, thirsted ; for thereby
Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice,
Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,
And, pledging all the mortals of the world,
And all the dead whose names are in our lips,
Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme.
No Asian poppy nor elixir fine
Of the soon-fading, jealous Caliphat,
No poison gender'd in close monkish cell,
To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,
Could so have rapt unwilling life away.
Among the fragrant husks and berries crush'd
Upon the grass, I struggled hard against
The domineering potion, but in vain.
The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sank,
Like a Silenus on an antique vase.
How long I slumber'd 'tis a chance to guess.
When sense of life return'd, I started up
As if with wings, but the fair trees were gone,
The mossy mound and arbour were no more :
I look'd around upon the carved sides
Of an old sanctuary with roof august,
Built so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds
Might spread beneath, as o'er the stars of
heaven.

So old the place was, I remember'd none
The like upon the earth : what I had seen
Of gray cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,

The superannuations of sunk realms,
Or Nature's rockstoil'd hard in waves and winds,
Seem'd but the faulture of decrepit things
To that eternal domed monument.
Upon the marble at my feet there lay
Store of strange vessels, and large draperies,
Which needs had been of dyed asbestos wove,
Or in that place the moth could not corrupt,
So white the linen, so, in some, distinct
Ran imageries from a sombre loom.
All in a mingled heap confus'd there lay
Robes, golden tongs, censer and chafing-dish,
Girdles, and chains, and holy jewelries.

Turning from these with awe, once more I
rais'd
My eyes to fathom the space every way ;
The embossed roof, the silent massy range
Of columns north and south, ending in mist
Of nothing ; then to eastward, where black
gates

Were shut against the sunrise evermore.
Then to the west I looked, and saw far off
An image, huge of feature as a cloud,
At level of whose feet an altar slept,
To be approach'd on either side by steps
And marble balustrade, and patient travail
To count with toil the innumerable degrees.
Towards the altar sober-pac'd I went,
Repressing haste, as too unholy there ;
And, coming nearer, saw beside the shrine
One minist'ring ; and there arose a flame.
When in mid-way the sickening east-wind
Shifts sudden to the south, the small warm rain
Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,
And fills the air with so much pleasant health
That even the dying man forgets his shroud ;—
Even so that lofty sacrificial fire,
Sending forth Maian incense, spread around
Forgetfulness of everything but bliss,
And clouded all the altar with soft smoke ;
From whose white fragrant curtains thus I
heard

Language pronounc'd : " If thou canst not
ascend

These steps, die on that marble where thou art.
Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
Will parch for lack of nutriment,—thy bones
Will wither in few years, and vanish so

JOHN KEATS.

That not the quickest eye could find a grain
Of what thou now art on that pavement cold.
The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
And no hand in the universe can turn
Thy hourglass, if these gummed leaves be
burnt

Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps."
I heard, I look'd : two senses both at once,
So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
Of that fierce threat and the hard task proposed.
Prodigious seem'd the toil ; the leaves were yet
Burning,—when suddenly a palsied chill
Struck from the paved level up my limbs,
And was ascending quick to put cold grasp
Upon those streams that pulse beside the throat.
I shriek'd, and the sharp anguish of my shriek
Stung my own ears,—I strove hard to escape
The numbness, strove to gain the lowest step.
Slow, heavy, deadly was my pace : the cold
Grew stifling, suffocating, at the heart ;
And when I clasp'd my hands I felt them not.
One minute before death, my iced foot touch'd
The lowest stair ; and, as it touch'd, life seem'd
To pour in at the toes ; I mounted up,
As once fair angels on a ladder flew
From the green turf to heaven. "Holy Power,"
Cried I, approaching near the horned shrine,
"What am I that should so be saved from
death ?

What am I that another death come not
To choke my utterance, sacrilegious, here ?"
Then said the veiled Shadow : "Thou hast
felt

What 'tis to die and live again before
Thy fated hour ; that thou hadst power to do so
Is thy own safety ; thou hast dated on
Thy doom." "High Prophetess," said I,
"purge off,

Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film."
"None can usurp this height," returned that
shade,

"But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.
All else who find a haven in the world,
Where they may thoughtless sleep away their
days,

If by a chance into this fane they come,
Rot on the pavement where thou rotted'st
half."

"Are there not thousands in the world," said I,
Encourag'd by the sooth voice of the shade,
"Who love their fellows even to the death,
Who feel the giant agony of the world,
And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
Labour for mortal good ? I sure should see
Other men here, but I am here alone."
"Those whom thou spak'st of are no vision-
aries,"

Rejoin'd that voice,—*"they are no dreamers
weak ;*

*They seek no wonder but the human face,
No music but a happy-noted voice—
They come not here, they have no thought to
come—*

*And thou art here, for thou art less than they.
What benefit canst thou, or all thy tribe,
To the great world ? Thou art a dreaming
thing,*

*A fever of thyself ; think of the earth ;
What bliss, even in hope, is there for thee ?
What haven ? every creature hath its home,
Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
Whether his labours be sublime or low—
The pain alone, the joy alone, distinct :
Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shar'd,
Such things as thou art are admitted oft
Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
And suffer'd in these temples : for that cause
Thou standest safe beneath this statue's knees."*

*"That I am favour'd for unworthiness,
By such propitious parley medicin'd
In sickness not ignoble, I rejoice,
Aye, and could weep for love of such award."
So answer'd I, continuing, "If it please,
[Majestic shadow, tell me : sure not all
Those melodies sung into the world's ear
Are useless : sure a poet is a sage ;
A humanist, physician to all men.*

*That I am none I feel, as vultures feel
They are no birds when eagles are abroad.
What am I then : thou spakest of my tribe :
What tribe ?" The tall shade veil'd in drooping
white*

*Then spake, so much more earnest, that the
breath*

Moved the thin linen folds that drooping hung

THE FALL OF HYPERION

ABOUT a golden censer from the hand
Pendent—"Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?
The poet and the dreamer are distinct
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the world
The other vexes it." Then shouted I
Spite of myself, and with a Pythia's spleen
"Apollo! faded! O far-flown Apollo!
Where is thy misty pestilence to creep
Into the dwellings, through the door crannies
Of all mock lyrists, large self-worshippers
And careless Hectorers in proud bad verse?
Though I breathe death with them it will be
life
To see them sprawl before me into graves.]
Majestic shadow, tell me where I am,
Whose altar this, for whom this incense curls;
What image this whose face I cannot see
For the broad marble knees; and who thou art,
Of accent feminine so courteous?"

Then the tall shade, in drooping linens veil'd,
Spake out, so much more earnest, that her
breath
Stirr'd the thin folds of gauze that drooping
hung
About a golden censer, from her hand
Pendent; and by her voice I knew she shed
Long-treasured tears. "This temple, sad and
lone,
Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
Against rebellion: this old image here,
Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
Is Saturn's; I, Moneta, left supreme,
Sole priestess of his desolation."
I had no words to answer, for my tongue,
Useless, could find about its roofed home
No syllable of a fit majesty
To make rejoinder to Moneta's mourn:
There was a silence, while the altar's blaze
Was fainting for sweet food. I look'd thereon,
And on the paved floor, where nigh were piled
Faggots of cinnamon, and many heaps
Of other crisped spicewood: then again
I look'd upon the altar, and its horns
Whiten'd with ashes, and its lang'rous flame,
And then upon the offerings again;
And so by turns—till sad Moneta cried:

"The sacrifice is done, but not the less
Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.
My power, which to me is still a curse,
Shall be to thee a wonder; for the scenes
Still swooning vivid through my globed brain,
With an electral changing misery,
Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold
Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not."
As near as an immortal's sphered words
Could to a mother's soften, were these last:
And yet I had a terror of her robes,
And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries,
That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face,
Not pined by human sorrows, but bright-
blanch'd
By an immortal sickness which kills not;
It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had past
The lily and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face.
But for her eyes I should have fled away.
They held me back with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
Of all external things—they saw me not,
But, in blank splendour, beam'd like the mild
moon,
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows
not
What eyes are upward cast. As I had found
A grain of gold upon a mountain's side,
And, twinged with avarice, strain'd out my eyes
To search its sullen entrails rich with ore,
So, at the view of sad Moneta's brow,
I asked to see what things the hollow brain
Behind environed: what high tragedy
In the dark secret chambers of her skull
Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
To her cold lips, and fill with such a light
Her planetary eyes, and touch her voice
With such a sorrow.—"Shade of Memory!"
Cried I, with act adorant at her feet,
"By all the gloom hung round thy fallen house,
By this last temple, by the golden age,
By great Apollo, thy dear foster-child,

JOHN KEATS,

And by thyself, forlorn divinity,
The pale Omega of a wither'd race,
Let me behold, according as thou saidst,
What in thy brain so ferments to and fro!"
No sooner had this conjuration pass'd
My devout lips, than side by side we stood
(Like a stunt bramble by a solemn pine)
Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star.
Onward I look'd beneath the gloomy boughs,
And saw what first I thought an image huge,
Like to the image pedestall'd so high
In Saturn's temple; then Moneta's voice
Came brief upon mine ear.—"So Saturn sat
When he had lost his realms—" whereon there
grew

A power within me of enormous ken,
To see as a god sees, and take the depth
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade. The lofty theme
Of those few words hung vast before my mind
With half-unravell'd web. I sat myself
Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
And seeing ne'er forget. No stir of life
Was in this shrouded vale, not so much air
As in the zoning of a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell there did it rest:
A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more
By reason of the fallen divinity
Spreading more shade; the Naiad 'mid her
reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin sand large footmarks went
No farther than to where old Saturn's feet
Had rested, and there slept, how long a sleep!
Degraded, cold, upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unseptr'd, and his realmless eyes were clos'd;
While his bow'd head seem'd listening to the
Earth,
His antient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his
place;
But there came one who, with a kindred hand,
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low

With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
Then came the griev'd voice of Mnemosyne,
And griev'd I hearken'd. "That divinity
Whom thou saw'st step from yon forlornest
wood,

And with slow pace approach our fallen king,
Is Thea, softest-natur'd of our brood."
I mark'd the Goddess, in fair statuary
Surpassing wan Moneta by the head,
And in her sorrow nearer woman's tears.
There was a list'ning fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart; as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain;
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spoke
In solemn tenour and deep organ-tone;
Some mourning words, which in our feeble
tongue
Would come in this like accenting; how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!

"Saturn, look up! and for what, poor lost
king?
I have no comfort for thee; no—not one;
I cannot cry, *wherefore thus sleepest thou?*
For Heaven is parted from thee, and the
Earth
Knows thee not, so afflicted, for a God.
The Ocean, too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre pass'd; and all the air
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
Thy thunder, captious at the new command,
Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
And thy sharp lightning, in unpractised hands
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.

"With such remorseless speed still come new
woes,
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
Saturn! sleep on:—me thoughtless, why should I
'Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
Saturn! sleep on, while at thy feet I weep."

THE FALL OF HYPERION

As when upon a tranced summer night
 Forests, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
 Dream, and so dream all night without a noise,
 Save from one gradual solitary gust
 Swelling upon the silence; dying off;
 As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
 So came these words and went; the while in tears
 She press'd her fair large forehead to the earth,
 Just where her fallen hair might spread in curls,
 A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
 Long, long these two were postured motionless,
 Like sculpture builded-up upon the grave
 Of their own power. A long awful time
 I look'd upon them: still they were the same;
 The frozen God still bending to the earth,
 And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet,
 Moneta silent. Without stay or prop,
 But my own weak mortality, I bore
 The load of this eternal quietude,
 The unchanging gloom and the three fixed
 shapes
 Ponderous upon my senses, a whole moon;
 For by my burning brain I measured sure
 Her silver seasons shedded on the night,
 And every day by day methought I grew
 More gaunt and ghostly. Oftentimes I pray'd
 Intense, that death would take me from the vale
 And all its burthens; gasping with despair
 Of change, hour after hour I curs'd myself;
 Until old Saturn raised his faded eyes,
 And look'd around, and saw his kingdom gone,
 And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
 And that fair kneeling Goddess at his feet.

As the moist scent of flowers, and grass, and
 leaves
 Fills forest-dells with a pervading air,
 Known to the woodland nostril, so the words
 Of Saturn fill'd the mossy glooms around,
 Even to the hollows of time-eaten oaks,
 And to the windings of the foxes' hole,
 With sad, low tones, while thus he spake, and
 • sent
 Strange musings to the solitary Pan.
 "Moan, brethren, moan, for we are swallow'd
 up
 And buried from all godlike exercise
 Of influence benign on planets pale,
 And peaceful sway above man's harvesting,

And all those acts which Deity supreme
 Doth ease its heart of love in. Moan and wail;
 Moan, brethren, moan; for lo, the rebel spheres
 Spin round; the stars their antient courses keep;
 Clouds still with shadowy moisture haunt the
 earth,
 Still suck their fill of light from sun and moon;
 Still buds the tree, and still the seashores
 murmur;
 There is no death in all the universe,
 No smell of death.—There shall be death.
 Moan, moan;
 Moan, Cybele, moan; for thy pernicious babes
 Have changed a god into a shaking palsy.
 Moan, brethren, moan, for I have no strength
 left;
 Weak as the reed—weak—feeble as my voice—
 Oh! Oh! the pain, the pain of feebleness.
 Moan, moan, for still I thaw—or give me help;
 Throw down those imps, and give me victory.
 Let me hear other groans, and trumpets blown
 Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival,
 From the gold peaks of heaven's high-piled
 clouds;
 Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
 Of strings in hollow shells; and let there be
 Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
 Of the sky-children." So he feebly ceas'd,
 With such a poor and sickly-sounding pause,
 Methought I heard some old man of the earth
 Bewailing earthly loss; nor could my eyes
 And ears act with that unison of sense
 Which marries sweet sound with the grace of
 form,
 And dolorous accent from a tragic harp
 With large-limb'd visions. More I scrutinized.
 Still fixt he sat beneath the sable trees,
 Whose arms spread straggling in wild serpent
 forms,
 With leaves all hush'd; his awful presence there
 (Now all was silent) gave a deadly lie
 To what I erewhile heard: only his lips
 Trembled amid the white curls of his beard;
 They told the truth, though, round, the snowy
 locks
 Hung nobly, as upon the face of heaven
 A mid-day fleece of clouds. Thea arose,
 And stretcht her white arm through the hollow
 dark,

JOHN KEATS

Pointing some whither : whereat he too rose,
 Like a vast giant, seen by men at sea
 To grow pale from the waves at dull midnight.
 They melted from my sight into the woods ;
 Ere I could turn, Moneta cried, " These twain
 Are speeding to the families of grief,
 Where, roof'd in by black rocks, they waste in
 pain
 And darkness, for no hope." And she spake on,
 As ye may read who can unwearied pass
 Onward from the antechamber of this dream,
 Where, even at the open doors, awhile
 I must delay, and glean my memory
 Of her high phrase :—perhaps no further dare.

END OF CANTO I.

CANTO II

" **M**ORTAL, that thou mayst understand aright,
 I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
 Making comparisons of earthly things ;
 Or thou mightst better listen to the wind,
 Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
 Though it blows legend-laden through the
 trees.
 In melancholy realms big tears are shed,
 More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
 Too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe.
 The Titans fierce, self-hid or prison-bound,
 Groan for the old allegiance once more,
 Listening in their doom for Saturn's voice.
 But one of the whole eagle-brood still keeps
 His sovereignty, and rule, and majesty :
 Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
 Still sits, still snuffs the incense teeming up,
 From Man to the Sun's God—yet unsecure.
 For as upon the earth dire prodigies
 Fright and perplex, so also shudders he ;
 Nor at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's Even
 screech,
 Or the familiar visitings of one
 Upon the first toll of his passing bell,
 But horrors, portioned to a giant nerve,
 Make great Hyperion ache. His palace bright.
 Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
 And touched with shade of bronzed obelisks,
 Glares a blood-red thro' all the thousand courts,

Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;
 And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
 Flush angerly ; when he would taste the wreaths
 Of incense breathed aloft from sacred hills,
 Instead of sweets, his ample palate takes
 Savour of poisonous brass and metals sick ;
 Wherefore when harbour'd in the sleepy West,
 After the full completion of fair day,
 For rest divine upon exalted couch
 And slumber in the arms of melody,
 He paces through the pleasant hours of ease,
 With strides colossal, on from hall to hall,
 While far within each aisle and deep recess
 His winged minions in close clusters stand
 Amaz'd, and full of fear ; like anxious men,
 Who on a wide plain gather in sad troops,
 When earthquakes jar their battlements and
 towers.

Even now where Saturn, roused from icy trance,
 Goes, step for step, with Thea from yon woods,
 Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
 Is sloping to the threshold of the West.
 Thither we tend." Now in clear light I stood,
 Reliev'd from the dusk vale. Mnemosyne
 Was sitting on a square-edg'd polish'd stone,
 That in its lucid depth reflected pure
 Her priestess-garments. My quick eyes ran on
 From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
 Through bow'rs of fragrant and enwreathed
 light,
 And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades.
 Anon rush'd by the bright Hyperion ;
 His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
 And gave a roar, as it of earthly fire,
 That scared away the meek ethereal hours,
 And made their dove wings tremble. On he
 flared.

LAMIA

PART I

UPON a time, before the faery broods
 Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
 Before king Oberon's bright diadem,
 Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
 Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns

LAMIA

From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd
lawns,

The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft :
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.

For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt ;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured
Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.

ast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometime she might
haunt,

Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet !

So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.
From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her
secret bed :

In vain : the sweet nymph might nowhere be
found,

And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity : thus the lone voice spake :
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake !
When move in a sweet body fit for life,
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips ! Ah, miserable me !"

The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,

Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar :
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet !
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls
complete :

And for her eyes : what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair ?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's
sake,

And thus ; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey.

"Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, flutter-
ing light,

I had a splendid dream of thee last night :
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
The only sad one ; for thou didst not hear
The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chanting clear,
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long
melodious moan.

I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning
breaks,

And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,
Strike for the Cretan isle ; and here thou art !
Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid ?"
Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired :
"Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high in-
spired !

Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
Where she doth breathe !" "Bright planet,
thou hast said,"

Return'd the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair
God !"

"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,

JOHN KEATS

And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"
Light flew his earnest words, among the
blossoms blown.

Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
And by my power is her beauty veil'd
To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs.
Pale grew her immortality, for woe
Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
I took compassion on her, bade her steep
Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
Her loveliness invisible, yet free
To wander as she loves, in liberty.
Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lipsing said,
"I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
Give me my woman's form, and place me where
he is.

Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now."
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the
green.

It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might
seem

Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he
burn'd;

Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd
To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lythe Caducean charm.

So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
And towards her stept: she, like a moon in
wane,

Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour:
But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.
Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith be-
sprent,
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one
cooling tear.

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and
bars,

Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown; that vanish'd, also she
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, "Lycius! gentle Lycius!"—Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains soar
These words dissolv'd: Crete's forests heard no
more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore;
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,

LAMIA

The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned
To see herself escap'd from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy:
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of scintial brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
As ' kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so fairly
By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list, strange or magnificent:
How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium, or where
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids
fair
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly
stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim

He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and
incense rare.

Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her
eyes

Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
Turn'd—syllabbling thus, "Ah, Lycius bright,
And will you leave me on the hills alone?
Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown."
He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer
long:

And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish, ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain
so sure:

"Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see

Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
For pity do not this sad heart belie—
Even as thou vanishest so I shall die.
Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
Stay! though the greenest woods be thy
domain,

JOHN KEATS

Alone they can drink up the morning rain :
Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine ?
So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst
fade

Thy memory will waste me to a shade :—
For pity do not melt !—" If I should stay,"
Said Lamia, " here, upon this floor of clay,
And pain my steps upon these flowers too
rough,

What canst thou say or do of charm enough
To dull the nice remembrance of my home ?
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
Empty of immortality and bliss !

Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
That finer spirits cannot breathe below
In human climes, and live : Alas ! poor youth,
What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
My essence ? What serener palaces,
Where I may all my many senses please,
And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts
appease ?

It cannot be—Adieu !" So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to
lose

The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swoon'd, murmuring of love, and pale with
pain.

The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh :
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every
thing,

A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their
panting fires.

And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish'd days,
Use other speech than looks ; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,

For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same
pains

Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retir'd, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love ; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by,
Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd—
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd ;
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
The Adonian feast ; whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she
adore ?

Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays ;
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well ;
And every word she spake entic'd him on
To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lincal indeed
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh ;
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces ; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprized.
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,

LAMIA

And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spread night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companion'd or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
His fingers he press'd hard, as one came near
With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth
bald crown,
Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he,
"Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?
Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"—
"I'm wearied," said fair Lamia: "tell me who
Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you
blind
Yourself from his quick eyes?" Lycius replied,
"'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams."

While yet he spake they had arriv'd before
A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor
glow
Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
Mild as a star in water; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Æolian
Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone,
And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets: none knew
where
They could inhabit; the most curious
Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their
house:

And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
'Twould humour many a heart to leave them
thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

PART II

LOVE in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes,
dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:—
That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
Or clench'd it quite: but too short was their
bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft
voice hiss.
Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the
floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they re-
posed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids
closed,
Saving a tythe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they
almost slept;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harbour'd in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.

JOHN KEATS

The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys ; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing
 bell.

"Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whisper'd
 he :

"Why do you think?" return'd she tenderly :

"You have deserted me ;—where am I now?
Not in your heart while care weighs on your
 brow :

No, no, you have dismiss'd me ; and I go
From your breast houseless : ay, it must be so."

He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,

"My silver planet, both of eve and morn !

Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,

While I am striving how to fill my heart

With deeper crimson, and a double smart?

How to entangle, trammel up and snare

Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there

Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?

Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.

My thoughts ! shall I unveil them? Listen then !

What mortal hath a prize, that other men

May be confounded and abash'd withal,

But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,

And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice

Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.

Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,

While through the thronged streets your bridal
 car

Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's
 cheek

Trembled ; she nothing said, but, pale and
 meek,

Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain

Of sorrows at his words ; at last with pain

Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,

To change his purpose. He threat was stung,

Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim

Her wild and timid nature to his aim :

Besides, for all his love, in self despite,

Against his better self, he took delight

Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.

His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue

Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible

In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.

Fine was the mitigated fury, like

Apollo's presence when in act to strike

The serpent—Ha, the serpent ! certes, she

Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny,

And, all subdued, consented to the hour

When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.

Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,

"Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by
 my truth,

I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee

Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,

As still I do. Hast any mortal name,

Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?

Or friends or kinsfolk on the cited earth,

To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?"

"I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one ;

My presence in wide Corinth hardly known :

My parents' bones are in their dusty urns

Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,

Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,

And I neglect the holy rite for thee.

Even as you list invite your many guests ;

But if, as now it seems, your vision rests

With any pleasure on me, do not bid

Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid."

Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,

Made close inquiry ; from whose touch she
 shrank,

Feigning a sleep ; and he to the dull shade

Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away

The bride from home at blushing shut of day,

Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along

By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,

With other pageants : but this fair unknown

Had not a friend. So being left alone,

(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)

And knowing surely she could never win

His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,

She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress

The misery in fit magnificence.

She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence

Came, and who were her subtle servitors.

About the halls, and to and from the doors, ~

There was a noise of wings, till in short space

The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-
 arched grace.

LAMIA

A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might
fade.

Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride :
Two palms and then two plaintains, and soon,
From either side their stems branch'd one to one
All down the aisled place ; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from
wall to wall.

~~So~~ canopied, lay an untasted feast
Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper pannels ; then, anon there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her
solitude.

The day appear'd, and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius ! Madman ! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,
And show to common eyes these secret bowers ?
The herd approach'd ; each guest, with busy
brain,

Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain,
And enter'd marveling : for they knew the street,
Remember'd it from childhood all complete
Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne ;
So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen :
Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere ;
'Twas Apollonius : something too he laugh'd,
As though some knotty problem, that had daft
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt ;—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. " 'Tis no common rule,

Lycius," said he, " for uninvited guest
To force himself upon you, and infest
With an unbidden presence the bright throng
Of younger friends ; yet must I do this wrong,
And you forgive me." Lycius blush'd, and
led

The old man through the inner doors broad-
spread ;
With reconciling words and courteous mien
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume :
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets ; fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast rear'd
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a
God.

When in an antichamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure
press'd,
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth
could spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow ;
But when the happy vintage touch'd their
brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains

JOHN KEATS

Of powerful instruments :—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange ; for merry wine, sweet
wine,

Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too
divine.

Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height ;
Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes
double bright :

Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-
rent,

In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought
High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
Of every guest ; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his
ease.

What wreath for Lamia ? What for Lycius ?
What for the sage, old Apollonius ?
Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue ;
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may
swim

Into forgetfulness ; and, for the sage,
Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven :
We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge him. The bald head philosopher

Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her
sweet pride.

Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch :
'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins ;
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.

"Lamia, what means this ? Wherefore dost
thou start ?

Know'st thou that man ?" Poor Lamia
answer'd not.

He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot
Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal :
More, more he gaz'd : his human senses reel :
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs ;
There was no recognition in those orbs.

"Lamia !" he cried— and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush ; the stately music no more breathes ;
The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure
ceased ;

A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
"Lamia !" he shriek'd ; and nothing but the
shriek

With its sad echo did the silence break.
"Begone, foul dream !" he cried, gazing again
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
Wander'd on her sacred temples ; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek ; no passion to illumine
The deep-recessed vision :—all was blight ;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
"Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless
man !

Turn them aside, wretch ! or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
Of painful blindness ; leaving thee forlorn,
In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
Of conscience, for their long offended might,
For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
Corinthians ! look upon that gray-beard wretch !
Mark how, possess'd, his lashless eyelids stretch



"With every morn their love grew tenderer."

[Page 123]

ISABELLA

Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
My sweet bride withers at their potency."
"Fool!" said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing
moan

From Lycius answer'd, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes
still!

Relented not, nor mov'd: "from every ill
Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"
Then Lamia breath'd death breath; the soph-
ist's eye,

Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion'd him to be silent; vainly so,
He look'd and look'd again a level—No!

"A serpent!" echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same
night.

On the high couch he lay!—his friends came
round—

Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body
wound.¹

"Philostratus, in his fourth book *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece."—Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, part 3, sect. 2, memb. 1, subs. 1.

ISABELLA

OR

THE POT OF BASIL

A STORY FROM BOCCACCIO

I

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel!
Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye!
They could not in the self-same mansion
dwell

Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothed each to be the other by;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof
sleep
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
With every eve deeper and tenderer still;
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
But her full shape would all his seeing fill;
And his continual voice was pleasanter
To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill;
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,
She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

III

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch
Before the door had given her to his eyes;
And from her Chamber-window he would catch
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies;
And constant as her vespers would he watch,
Because her face was turn'd to the same
skies;
And with sick longing all the night outwear,
To hear her morning step upon the stair.

IV

A whole long month of May in this sad plight
Made their cheeks paler by the break of June.
"To-morrow will I bow to my delight,
To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon."
"O may I never see another night,
Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune."—
So spake they to their pillows; but, alas,
Honeyless days and days did he let pass;

JOHN KEATS

V

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek
 Fell sick within the rose's just domain,
 Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek
 By every lull to cool her infant's pain :
 "How ill she is," said he, "I may not speak,
 And yet I will, and tell my love all plain :
 If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,
 And at the least 'twill startle off her cares."

VI

So said he one fair morning, and all day
 His heart beat awfully against his side ;
 And to his heart he inwardly did pray
 For power to speak ; but still the ruddy tide
 Stifled his voice, and puls'd resolve away—
 Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,
 Yet brought him to the meekness of a child :
 Alas ! when passion is both meek and wild !

VII

So once more he had wak'd and anguished
 A dreary night of love and misery,
 If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
 To every symbol on his forehead high ;
 She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
 And straight all flush'd ; so, lisped tenderly,
 "Lorenzo !"—here she ceas'd her timid quest,
 But in her tone and look he read the rest.

VIII

"O Isabella, I can half perceive
 That I may speak my grief into thine ear ;
 If thou didst ever anything believe,
 Believe how I love thee, believe how near
 My soul is to its doom : I would not grieve
 Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not
 fear
 Thine eyes by gazing ; but I cannot live
 Another night, and not my passion shrive.

IX

"Love ! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
 Lady ! thou leadest me to summer clime,
 And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
 In its ripe warmth this gracious morning
 time."

So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
 And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme :
 Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
 Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

X

Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air,
 Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
 Only to meet again more close, and share
 The inward fragrance of each other's heart.
 She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
 Sang, of delicious love and honey'd dart ;
 He with light steps went up a western hill,
 And bade the sun farewell, and joy'd his fill.

XI

All close they met again, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 All close they met, all eves, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
 Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
 Ah ! better had it been for ever so,
 Than idle cars should pleasure in their woe.

XII

Were they unhappy then ?—It cannot be —
 Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
 Too much of pity after they are dead,
 Too many doleful stories do we see,
 Whose matter in bright gold were best be
 read ;
 Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
 Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII

But, for the general award of love,
 The little sweet doth kill much bitterness ;
 Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
 And Isabella's was a great distress,
 Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian
 clove
 Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the
 less—
 Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
 Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

ISABELLA

XIV

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
 Enriched from ancestral merchandize,
 And for them many a weary hand did swelt
 In torched mines and noisy factories,
 And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt
 In blood from stinging whip;—with hollow
 eyes
 Many all day in dazzling river stood,
 To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

XV

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
 And went all naked to the hungry shark;
 For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in
 death
 The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
 Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
 A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:
 Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,
 That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

XVI

Why were they proud? Because their marble
 founts
 Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's
 tears?—
 Why were they proud? Because fair orange-
 mounts
 Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?—
 Why were they proud? Because red-lin'd
 accounts
 Were richer than the songs of Grecian
 years?—
 Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,
 Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

XVII

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired
 • In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,
 As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
 Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies;
 The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired
 And pannier'd mules for ducats and old
 lies—
 Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,—
 Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

K*

XVIII

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
 Fair Isabella in her downy nest?
 How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
 A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest
 Into their vision covetous and sly!
 How could these money-bags see east and
 west?—
 Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
 Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!
 Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
 And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
 And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
 And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
 Now they can no more hear thy glittern's
 tune,
 For venturing syllables that ill beseem
 The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

XX

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
 Shall move on soberly, as it is meet;
 There is no other crime, no mad assail
 To make old prose in modern rhyme more
 sweet:
 But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—
 To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet;
 To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
 An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

XXI

These brethren having found by many signs
 What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
 And how she lov'd him too, each unconfines
 His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad
 That he, the servant of their trade designs,
 Should in their sister's love be blithe and
 glad,
 When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
 To some high noble and his olive-trees.

XXII

And many a jealous conference had they,
 And many times they bit their lips alone.

JOHN KEATS

Before they fix'd upon a surest way
To make the youngster for his crime atone ;
And at the last, these men of cruel clay
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone ;
For they resolved in some forest dim
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade
Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
Their footing through the dews ; and to him
said,
" You seem there in the quiet of content,
Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
Calm speculation ; but if you are wise,
Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV

" To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount
To spur three leagues towards the Apen-
nine ;
Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun
count
His dewy rosary on the eglantine."
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents'
whine ;
And went in haste, to get in readiness,
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's
dress.

XXV

And as he to the court-yard pass'd along,
Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,
Or the light whisper of her footstep soft ;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
He heard a laugh full musical aloft ;
When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

XXVI

" Love, Isabel !" said he, " I was in pain
Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow :
Ah ! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
Of a poor three hours' absence ? but we'll gain
Out of the amorous dark what day doth
borrow.

Good bye ! I'll soon be back."—" Good bye !"
said she :—
And as he 'went she chanted merrily.

XXVII

So the two brothers and their murder'd man
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's
stream
Gurgles through straiten'd banks, and still doth
fan
Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,
Lorenzo's flush with love.—They pass'd the
water
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
There in that forest did his great love cease ;
Ah ! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace
As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin :
They dipp'd their swords in the water, and
did tease
Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur,
Each richer by his being a murderer.

XXIX

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,
Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,
Because of some great urgency and need
In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
Poor Girl ! put on thy stilling widow's weed,
And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed
bands ;
To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be ;
Sorely she wept until the night came on,
And then, instead of love, O misery !
She brooded o'er the luxury alone :
His image in the dusk she seem'd to see,
And to the silence made a gentle moan,
Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
And on her couch low murmuring " Where ? O
where ?"

ISABELLA

XXXI

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
Its fiery vigil in her single breast;
She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
Upon the time with feverish unrest—
Not long—for soon into her heart a throng
Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
Came tragic; passion not to be subdued,
And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
The breath of Winter comes from far away,
And the sick west continually bereaves
Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
To make all bare before he dares to stray
From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

XXXIII

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all
pale,
Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
Could keep him off so long? They spake a
tale
Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's
vale;
And every night in dreams they groan'd
aloud,
To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

XXXIV

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,
But for a thing more deadly dark than all;
It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
Which saves a sick man from the feather'd
pall
For some few gasping moments; like a lance,
Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall
With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

XXXV

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom,
The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot

Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb
Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could
shoot
Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
Had made a miry channel for his tears.

XXXVI

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow
spake;
For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
To speak as when on earth it was awake,
And Isabella on its music hung:
Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,
As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung;
And through it moan'd a ghostly under-song,
Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

XXXVII

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
From the poor girl by magic of their light,
The while it did unthread the horrid woof
Of the late darken'd time, - the murderous spite
Of pride and avarice, - the dark pine roof
In the forest,—and the sodden turfed dell,
Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

XXXVIII

Saying moreover, "Isabel, my sweet!
Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;
Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat
Comes from beyond the river to my bed:
Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

XXXIX

"I am a shadow now, alas! alas!
Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling
Alone: I chant alone the holy mass,
While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,
Paining me through: those sounds grow strange
to me,
And thou art distant in Humanity.

JOHN KEATS

XL

"I know what was, I feel full well what is,
And I should rage, if spirits could go mad;
Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,
That paleness warms my grave, as though
I had
A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss
To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me
glad;
Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
A greater love through all my essence steal."

XLI

The Spirit mourn'd "Adieu!"—dissolv'd, and left
The atom darkness in a slow turmoil;
As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,
And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil:
It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,
And in the dawn she started up awake;

XLII

"Ha! ha!" said she, "I knew not this hard life,
I thought the worst was simple misery;
I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
Portion'd us—happy days, or else to die;
But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife!
Sweet Spirit, thou hast school'd my infancy:
I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,
And greet thee morn and even in the skies."

XLIII

When the full morning came, she had devised
How she might secret to the forest hie;
How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
And sing to it one latest lullaby;
How her short absence might be unsurmised,
While she the inmost of the dream would try.
Resolv'd, she took with her an aged nurse,
And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

XLIV

See, as they creep along the river side,
How she doth whisper to that aged Dame,
And, after looking round the champaign wide,
Shows her a knife.—"What feverous hectic
flame

Burns in thee, child?—What good can thee
betide,
That thou should'st smile again?"—The
evening came,
And they had found Lorenzo's earthy bed;
The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV

Who hath not loiter'd in a green church-yard,
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see scull, coffin'd bones, and funeral stole;
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath
marr'd,
And filling it once more with human soul?
Ah! this is holiday to what was felt
When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

XLVI

She gaz'd into the fresh-thrown mould, as
though
One glance did fully all its secrets tell;
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;
Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow,
Like to a native lily of the dell:
Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
To dig more fervently than misers can.

XLVII

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon
Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies,
She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,
And put it in her bosom, where it dries
And freezes utterly unto the bone
Those dainties made to still an infant's cries:
Then 'gan she work again; nor stay'd her
care,
But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

XLVIII

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
Until her heart felt pity to the core
At sight of such a dismal labouring,
And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar,
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:
Three hours they labour'd at this travail
sore;

ISABELLA

At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

XLIX

Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance?
Why linger at the yawning tomb so long?
O for the gentleness of old Romance,
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song!
Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance.
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale,
And taste the music of that vision pale.

L

With duller steel than the Persean sword
They cut away no formless monster's head,
But one, whose gentleness did well accord
With death, as life. The ancient harps have
said,
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:
If Love impersonate was ever dead,
Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.
'Twas love; cold,—dead indeed, but not
dethroned.

LI

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
And then the prize was all for Isabel:
She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
She drench'd away:—and still she comb'd, and
kept
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd, and wept.

LII

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
Through the cold serpent-pipe refresh-
fully,—
She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did
choose.
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

LIII

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze;
She had no knowledge when the day was done.
And the new morn she saw not: but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

LIV

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it
grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of Basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
From the fast mouldering head there shut
from view:
So that the jewel, safely casketed,
Came forth, and in perfumed leaflets spread.

LV

O Melancholy, linger here awhile!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh!
Spirits in grief, lit up your heads, and smile;
Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

LVI

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
From the deep throat of sad Melpomene!
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
And touch the strings into a mystery;
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low;
For simple Isabel is soon to be
Among the dead: She withers, like a palm
Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

LVII

O leave the palm to wither by itself;
Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour!—
It may not be—those Baalites of pelf,
Her brethren, noted the continual shower

JOHN KEATS

From her dead eyes ; and many a curious elf,
Among her kindred, wonder'd that such
dower
Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside
By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

LVIII

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much
Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,
And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch ;
Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might
mean :
They could not surely give belief, that such
A very nothing would have power to wean
Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might
sift
This hidden whim ; and long they watch'd in
vain ;
For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
And seldom felt she any hunger-pain ;
And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
As bird on wing to breast its eggs again ;
And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

LX

Yet they contriv'd to steal the Basil-pot,
And to examine it in secret place :
The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face :
The guerdon of their murder they had got,
And so left Florence in a moment's space,
Never to turn again.—Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

LXI

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away !
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethæan, sigh to us—O sigh !
Spirits of grief, sing not your "Well-a-way !"
For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die ;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

LXII

Piteous she look'd on dead and senseless things,
Asking for her lost Basil amorously ;
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
To ask him where her Basil was ; and why
'Twas hid from her : "For cruel 'tis," said she,
"To steal my Basil-pot away from me."

LXIII

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
Imploring for her Basil to the last.
No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
In pity of her love, so overcast.
And a sad ditty of this story born
From mouth to mouth through all the
country pass'd :
Still is the burthen sung—"O cruelty,
To steal my Basil-pot away from me!"

THE EVE OF ST AGNES

ST AGNES' Eve—Ah, bitterchill it was !
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
The hare limp'd trembling through
the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold :
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while
he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a
death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer
he saith.

II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man ;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his
knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to
freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails :

THE EVE OF ST AGNES

Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and
mails.

III

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden
tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor ;
But not—already had his deathbell rung :
The joys of all his life were said and sung :
His was harsh penance on St Agnes' Eve :
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to
grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude
soft ;
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was
wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide :
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice
rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-
wise on their breasts.

V

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs
gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry
day,
On love, and wing'd St Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times
declare.

VI

They told her how, upon St Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,

And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright ;
As, supperless to bed they must retire.
And couch supine their beauties, lily white ;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they
desire.

VII

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping
train
Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retir'd ; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere :
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of
the year.

VIII

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and
short :
The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she
sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ; all amorn,
Save to St Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the
moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on
fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and
implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen ;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth
such things have been.

JOHN KEATS

X

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian
hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords.
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's
flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his
face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from
this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-
thirsty race!"

XII

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish
Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and
land:
'Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a
whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair
sit,
And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here,
not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy
bier."

XIII

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she mutter'd "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,

Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

XIV

"St Agnes! Ah! it is St Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to
grieve."

XV

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacl'd she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments
cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown
rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou
didst seem."

XVII

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last
prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,

THE EVE OF ST AGNES

Or look with ruffian passion in her face :
 Good Angela, believe me by these tears ;
 Or I will, even in a moment's space,
 Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
 And beard them, though they be more fang'd
 than wolves and bears."

XVIII

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
 A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard
 thing,
 Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight
 toll ;
 Whose prayers for thee, each morn and
 evening,
 Were never miss'd."—Thus plaining, doth she
 bring
 A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;
 So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
 That Angela gives promise she will do
 Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
 Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
 Him in a closet, of such privacy
 That he might see her beauty unespied,
 And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
 While legion'd fairies pac'd the coverlet,
 And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
 Never on such a night have lovers met,
 Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous
 debt.

XX

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the
 Dame :
 "All cates and dainties shall be stored there
 Quickly on this feast-night : by the tambour
 frame
 Her own lute thou wilt see : no time to spare,
 For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
 On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
 Wait here, my child, with patience ; kneel
 in prayer
 The while : Ah! thou must needs the lady
 wed,
 Or may I never leave my grave among the
 dead."

XXI

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
 The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd ;
 The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
 To follow her ; with aged eyes aghast
 From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
 Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
 The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and
 chaste ;

Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.
 His poor guide hurried back with agues in her
 brain.

XXII

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
 Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
 When Madeline, St Agnes' charmed maid,
 Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware :
 With silver taper's light, and pious care,
 She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
 To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
 Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;
 She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove
 fray'd and fled.

• XXIII

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;
 Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died :
 She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin
 To spirits of the air, and visions wide :
 No uttered syllable, or, woe betide !
 But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
 Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;
 As though a tongueless nightingale should
 swell
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in
 her dell.

XXIV

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-
 grass,
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings ;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
 A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of
 queens and kings.

JOHN KEATS

XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry
moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair
breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and
boon ;
Rose bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew
faint :
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal
taint.

XXVI

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees ;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;
Loosens her fragrant bodice ; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is
fled.

XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the popped warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away ;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain :
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims
pray ;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud
again.

XXVIII

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness ;
Which when he heard, that minute did he
bless,
And breath'd himself : then from the closet
crept,

Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'twween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—
how fast she slept.

XXIX

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half-anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet,
Alfray his ears, though but in dying tone :—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is
gone.

XXX

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanch'd linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a
heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and
gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

XXXI

These delicate he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes : and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver : sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the empty room with perfume light.—
“ And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake !
Thou art my heaven, and I thine cremité :
Open thine eyes, for meek St Agnes'
sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth
ache.”

XXXII

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm,
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains :—'twas a midnight
charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream :



"Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled."

THE EVE OF ST AGNES

The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;
 Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies :
 It seem'd he never, never could redeem
 From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes ;
 So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
 Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest
 be,
 He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
 In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans
 mercy :"
 Close to her ear touching the melody ;—
 Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan :
 He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
 Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone :
 Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculp-
 tured stone.

XXXIV

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep :
 There was a painful change, that nigh ex-
 pell'd
 The blisses of her dream so pure and deep,
 At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a
 sigh ;
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would
 keep ;
 Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous
 eye,
 Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so
 dreamingly.

XXXV

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
 Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
 Made tuneable with every sweetest vow ;
 And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear :
 How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and
 drear!
 Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
 Those looks immortal, those complainings
 dear!
 O leave me not in this eternal woe,
 For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where
 to go."

XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
 Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
 Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose
 Blendeth its odour with the violet,
 Solution sweet : meantime the frost-wind
 blows
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
 Against the window-panes : St Agnes' moon
 hath set.

XXXVII

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flaw-blown
 sleet :
 "This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline !"
 'Tis dark : the iced gusts still rave and beat :
 "No dream, alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !
 Porphyro will leave me here to fade and
 pine.—
 Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ?
 I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
 Though thou forsakest a deceived thing ;—
 A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned
 wing."

XXXVIII

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
 Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?
 Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil
 dyed ?
 Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 After so many hours of toil and quest,
 A famish'd pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
 Saving of thy sweet self ; if thou think'st well
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX

"Hark ! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
 Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed :
 Arise—arise ! the morning is at hand ;—
 The bloated wassaillers will never heed :—
 Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
 There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
 Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
 Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,
 For o'er the southern moors I have a home for
 thee."

JOHN KEATS

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready
spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they
found.—
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each
door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and
hound,
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flaggon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his
hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges
groans.

XLII

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and
form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

THE EVE OF SAINT MARK

UPON a Sabbath-day it fell;
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
That call'd the folk to evening prayer;
The city streets were clean and fair
From wholesome drench of April rains;
And, on the western window panes,

The chilly sunset faintly told
Of unmatu'r'd green vallies cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
And daisies on the aguish hills.
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:
The silent streets were crowded well
With staid and pious companies,
Warm from their fire-side orat'ries;
And moving, with demurest air,
To even-song, and vesper prayer.
Each arched porch, and entry low,
Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,
With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
While play'd the organ loud and sweet.

The bells had ceas'd, the prayers begun,
And Bertha had not yet half done
A curious volume, patch'd and torn,
That all day long, from earliest morn,
Had taken captive her two eyes,
Among its golden broideries;
Perplex'd her with a thousand things,—
The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,
Martyrs in a fiery blaze,
Azure saints in silver rays,
Moses' breastplate, and the seven
Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,
The winged Lion of Saint Mark,
And the Covenantal Ark,
With its many mysteries,
Cherubim and golden mice.
Bertha was a maiden fair,
Dwelling in th' old Minster-square;
From her fire-side she could see,
Sidelong, its rich antiquity,
Far as the Bishop's garden-wall;
Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
Full leav'd, the forest had outstript,
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,
So shelter'd by the mighty pile.
Bertha arose, and read awhile,
With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.
Again she tried, and then again.
Until the dusk eve left her dark
Upon the legend of St. Mark.
From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,
She lifted up her soft warm chin,

THE EVE OF ST MARK

With aching neck and swimming eyes,
And daz'd with saintly imageries.

All was gloom, and silent all,
Save now and then the still foot-fall
Of one returning homewards late,
Past the echoing minster-gate.
The clamorous daws, that all the day
Above tree-tops and towers play,
Pair by pair had gone to rest,
Each in its ancient belfry-nest,
Where asleep they fall betimes,
To music of the drowsy chimes.

All was silent, all was gloom,
Abroad and in the homely room :
Down she sat, poor cheated soul !
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal ;
Lean'd forward, with bright drooping hair
And slant book, full against the glare.
Her shadow, in uneasy guise,
Hover'd about, a giant size,
On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,
The parrot's cage, and panel square ;
And the warm angled winter screen,
On which were many monsters seen,
Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,
And legless birds of Paradise,
Macaw, and tender Avadavat,
And silken-furr'd Angora cat.
Untir'd she read, her shadow still
Glower'd about, as it would fill
The room with wildest forms and shades,
As though some ghostly queen of spades

Had come to mock behind her back,
And dance, and ruffle her garments black.
Untir'd she read the legend page,
Of holy Mark, from youth to age,
On land, on sea, in pagan chains,
Rejoicing for his many pains.
Sometimes the learned eremite,
With golden star, or dagger bright,
Referr'd to pious poesies
Written in smallest crow-quill size
Beneath the text ; and thus the rhyme
Was parcell'd out from time to time :
——“ Als writith he of swevenis,
Men han beforne they wake in bliss,
Whanne that hir friendes thinke hem bound
In crimped shroude farre under grounde ;
And how a litling child mote be
A saint er its nativitee,
Gif that the modre (God her blesse !)
Kepen in solitarinesse,
And kissen devoute the holy croce.
Of Goddes love, and Sathan's force,—
He writith : and thinges many mo :
Of swiche thinges I may not show
Bot I must tellen verilie
Somdel of Saintè Cécilie,
And chieflie what he auctorethe
Of Saintè Markis life and dethe : ”

At length her constant eyelids come
Upon the fervent martyrdom ;
Then lastly to his holy shrine,
Exalt amid the tapers' shine
At Venice.—

REFLECTIVE POEMS AND EPISTLES

I STOOD TIP-TOE

I STOOD tip-toe upon a little hill.
The air was cooling, and so very still,
That the sweet buds which with a modest
pride

Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scanty leaved, and finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost those starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new
shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook ; sweetly they
slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there
crept

A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves :
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.
There was wide wand'ring for the greediest
eye,

To peer about upon variety ;
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim ;
To picture out the quaint, and curious bending
Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending ;
Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh them-
selves.

I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free
As though the fanning wings of Mercury
Had played upon my heels : I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started ;
So I straightway began to pluck a posey
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about
them ;

Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without
them ;

And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots to
keep them

Moist, cool and green ; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
Upon their summer thrones ; there too should
be

The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,
That with a score of light green brethren shoots
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots :
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear
waters

Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters
The spreading blue bells : it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thought-
lessly

By infant hands, left on the path to die.

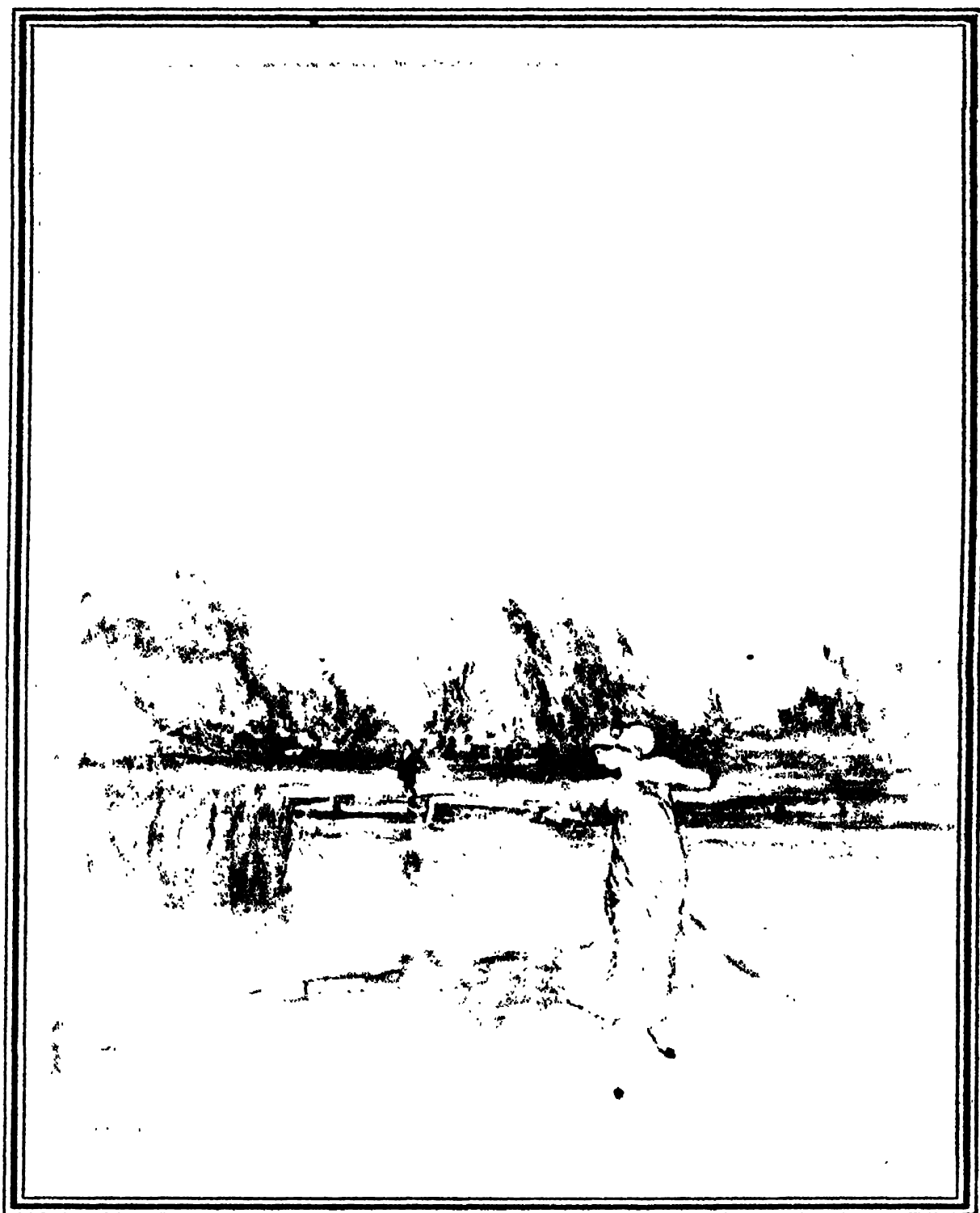
Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds !

Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids

That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung ;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses :
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight :
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,



"And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne."
(Page 141).

I STOOD TIP-TOE

And watch intently Nature's gentle doings :
They will be found softer than ring-dove's
cooings.

How silent comes the water round that bend ;
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging willows : blades of grass
Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.
Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they
reach

To where the hurrying freshneses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds ;
Where swarms of minnows show their little
heads,

Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain ;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those
cresses,

And cool themselves among the emerald tresses ;
The while they cool themselves, they freshness
give,

And moisture, that the bowery green may live :
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low hung branches ; little space they stop ;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek ;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak :
Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden
wings,

Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.
Were I in such a place, I sure should pray
That nought less sweet, might call my thoughts
away,

Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown
Fanning away the dandelion's down ;
Than the light music of her nimble toes
Pattering against the sorrel as she goes.

How she would start, and blush, thus to be
caught

Playing in all her innocence of thought.
O let me lead her gently o'er the brook,
Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward
look ;

O let me for one moment touch her wrist ;
Let me one moment to her breathing list ;
And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne.
What next ? A tuft of evening primroses,
O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes ;
O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep,
But that 'tis ever startled by the leap
Of buds into ripe flowers ; or by the flitting
Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting ;
Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
Coming into the blue with all her light.
O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight
Of this fair world, and all its gentle lovers ;
Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling
streams,

Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,
Lover of loneliness, and wandering,
Of upcast eye, and tender pondering !
Thee must I praise above all other glories
That smile us on to tell delightful stories.
For what has made the sage or poet write
But the fair paradise of Nature's light ?
In the calm grandeur of a sober line,
We see the waving of the mountain pine ;
And when a tale is beautifully staid,
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade :
When it is moving on luxurious wings,
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings :
Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,
And flowering laurels spring from diamond
vases ;

O'er head we see the jasmine and sweet briar,
And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire ;
While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
Charms us at once away from all our troubles :
So that we feel uplifted from the world,
Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd and
curl'd.

So felt he, who first told, how Psyche went
On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment ;
What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips
First touch'd ; what amorous, and fondling nips
They gave each other's cheeks ; with all their
sighs,

And how they kist each other's tremulous
eyes :

JOHN KEATS

The silver lamp,—the ravishment,—the wonder—

The darkness,—loneliness,—the fearful thunder ;

Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown,
To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.
So did he feel, who pull'd the boughs aside,
That we might look into a forest wide,
To catch a glimpse of Fawns, and Dryades
Coming with softest rustle through the trees ;
And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet,
Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet :
Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.
Poor nymph,—poor Pan,—how he did weep to find,

Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind
Along the reedy stream ; a half heard strain,
Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.

What first inspired a bard of old to sing
Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring ?
In some delicious ramble, he had found
A little space, with boughs all woven round ;
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool,
The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping.
And on the bank a lonely flower he spied,
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,
Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo its own sad image into nearness :
Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move ;
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.
So while the poet stood in this sweet spot,
Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot ;
Nor was it long ere he had told the tale
Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-
flew

That sweetest of all songs, that ever new,
That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness,
Coming ever to bless
The wanderer by moonlight ? to him bringing
Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly
singing

From out the middle air, from flowery nests,
And from the pillowy silkiness that rests

Full in the speculation of the stars.

Ah ! surely he had burst our mortal bars ;
Into some wond'rous region he had gone,
To search for thee, divine Endymion !

He was a Poet, sure a lover too,
Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew
Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below ;
And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow
A hymn from Dian's temple ; while upswelling
The incense went to her own starry dwelling.
But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,
Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,
The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,
Wept that such beauty should be desolate :
So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won,
And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air ; thou most lovely queer
Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen
As thou exceedest all things in thy shine,
So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine.
O for three words of honey, that I might
Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night !
Where distant ships do seem to show their keels
Phœbus awhile delayed his mighty wheels,
And turned to smile upon thy bashful eyes,
Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize.
The evening weather was so bright, and clear,
That men of health were of unusual cheer ;
Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call,
Or young Apollo on the pedestal :
And lovely women were as fair and warm,
As Venus looking sideways in alarm.
The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
And crept through half-closed lattices to cure
The languid sick ; it cool'd their fever'd sleep,
And soothed them into slumbers full and deep
Soon they awoke clear eyed : nor burnt, with
thirsting,

Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting
And springing up, they met the wond'ring sigh
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight
Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and
stare,

And on their placid foreheads part the hair.
Young men, and maidens at each other gaz'd
With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd
To see the brightness in each other's eyes ;

SLEEP AND POETRY

And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise,
 Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy.
 Therefore no lover did of anguish die :
 But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,
 Made silken ties, that never may be broken.
 Cynthia ! I cannot tell the greater blisses,
 That follow'd thine, and thy dear shepherd's
 kisses :
 Was there a Poet born ?—but now no more,
 My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.—

SLEEP AND POETRY

“ As I lay in my bed slepe full unmete
 Was unto me, but why that I ne might
 Rest I ne wist, for there n'as erthly wight
 [As I suppose] had more of heuris ese
 Than I, for I n'ad sicknesse nor disese ”

CHAUCER.

WHAT is more gentle than a wind in
 summer ?

What is more soothing than the
 pretty hummer

That stays one moment in an open flower,
 And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower ?
 What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing
 In a green island, far from all men's knowing ?
 More healthful than the leafiness of dales ?
 More secret than a nest of nightingales ?
 More serene than Cordelia's countenance ?
 More full of visions than a high romance ?
 What, but thee Sleep ? Soft closer of our eyes !
 Low murmurer of tender lullabies !
 Light hoverer around our happy pillows !
 Wreather of poppy buds, and weeping willows !
 Silent entangler of a beauty's tresses !
 Most happy listener ! when the morning blesses
 Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes
 That glance so brightly at the new sun-rise.

But what is higher beyond thought than thee ?
 Fresher than berries of a mountain tree ?

~~More~~ strange, more beautiful, more smooth,
 more regal,

Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-
 seen eagle ?

What is it ? And to what shall I compare it ?
 It has a glory, and nought else can share it :

The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy
 Chacing away all worldliness and folly ;
 Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,
 Or the low rumblings earth's regions under ;
 And sometimes like a gentle whispering
 Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing
 That breathes about us in the vacant air ;
 So that we look around with prying stare,
 Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial lymning,
 And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard
 hymning ;

To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended,
 That is to crown our name when life is ended.
 Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice,
 And from the heart up-springs, rejoice ! rejoice !
 Sounds which will reach the Framers of all things,
 And die away in ardent mutterings.

No one who once the glorious sun has seen,
 And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean
 For his great Maker's presence, but must know
 What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow :
 Therefore no insult will I give his spirit,
 By telling what he sees from native merit.

O Poesy ! for thee I hold my pen
 That am not yet a glorious denizen
 Of thy wide heaven—Should I rather kneel
 Upon some mountain-top until I feel
 A glowing splendour round about me hung,
 And echo back the voice of thine own tongue ?
 O Poesy ! for thee I grasp my pen
 That am not yet a glorious denizen
 Of thy wide heaven ; yet, to my ardent prayer,
 Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air,
 Smoothed for intoxication by the breath
 Of flowering bays, that I may die a death
 Of luxury, and my young spirit follow
 The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo
 Like a fresh sacrifice ; or, if I can bear
 The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the
 fair

Visions of all places : a bowery nook
 Will be elysium— an eternal book
 Whence I may copy many a lovely saying
 About the leaves, and flowers—about the
 playing
 Of nymphs in wood ; and fountains ; and the
 shade

JOHN KEATS

Keeping a silence round a sleeping maid ;
 And many a verse from so strange influence
 That we must ever wonder how, and whence
 It came. Also imaginings will hover
 Round my fire-side, and haply there discover
 Vistas of solemn beauty, where I'd wander
 In happy silence, like the clear Meander
 Through its lone vales ; and where I found a
 spot

Of awfuller shade, or an enchanted grot,
 Or a green hill o'erspread with chequered dress
 Of flowers, and fearful from its loveliness,
 Write on my tablets all that was permitted,
 All that was for our human senses fitted.
 Then the events of this wide world I'd seize
 Like a strong giant, and my spirit teaze
 Till at its shoulders it should proudly see
 Wings to find out an immortality.

Stop and consider ! life is but a day ;
 A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way
 From a tree's summit ; a poor Indian's sleep
 While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
 Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan ?
 Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown ;
 The reading of an ever-changing tale ;
 The light uplifting of a maiden's veil ;
 A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air ;
 A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
 Riding the springy branches of an elm.

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
 Myself in poesy ; so I may do the deed
 That my own soul has to itself decreed.
 Then will I pass the countries that I see
 In long perspective, and continually
 Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll
 pass

Of Flora, and old Pan : sleep in the grass,
 Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,
 And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees ;
 Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady
 places,

To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,—
 Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders
 white

Into a pretty shrinking with a bite
 As hard as lips can make it : till agreed,
 A lovely tale of human life we'll read.

And one will teach a tame dove how it best
 May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest ;
 Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,
 Will set a green robe floating round her head,
 And still will dance with ever varied ease,
 Smiling upon the flowers and the trees :
 Another will entice me on, and on
 Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon ;
 Till in the bosom of a leafy world
 We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd
 In the recesses of a pearly shell.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
 Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
 Where I may find the agonies, the strife
 Of human hearts : for lo ! I see afar,
 O'er sailing the blue cragginess, a car
 And steeds with streamy manes— the charioteer
 Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear :
 And now the numerous tramlings quiver lightly
 Along a huge cloud's ridge ; and now with
 sprightly

Wheel downward come they into fresher skies,
 Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright
 eyes.

Still downward with capacious whirl they glide ;
 And now I see them on a green-hill's side
 In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.
 The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks
 To the trees and mountains ; and there soon
 appear

Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
 Passing along before a dusky space
 Made by some mighty oaks : as they would chase
 Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.
 Lo ! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and
 weep :

Some with upholden hand and mouth severe ;
 Some with their faces muffled to the ear
 Between their arms ; some, clear in youthful
 bloom,

Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom ;
 Some looking back, and some with upward
 gaze ;

Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
 Flit onward—now a lovely wreath of girls
 Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls ;
 And now broad wings. Most awfully intent
 The driver of those steeds is forward bent,

SLEEP AND POETRY

And seems to listen : O that I might know
All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled—the car is fled
Into the light of heaven, and in their stead
A sense of real things comes doubly strong,
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness : but I will strive
Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
The thought of that same chariot, and the
strange
Journey it went.

Is there so small a range
In the present strength of manhood, that the
high

Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds,
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
Upon the clouds? Has she not shown us all?
From the clear space of ether, to the small
Breath of new buds unfolding? From the
meaning

Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening
Of April meadows? Here her altar shone,
E'en in this isle; and who could paragon
The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
Of harmony, to where it aye will poise
Its mighty self of convoluting sound,
Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,
Eternally around a dizzy void?
Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd
With honours; nor had any other care
Than to sing out and sooth their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not under-
stand

His glories: with a puling infant's force
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed

To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it,—no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepid standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy mottoes, and in large
The name of one Boileau!

O ye whose charge
It is to hover round our pleasant hills!
Whose congregated majesty so fills
My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace
Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,
So near those common folk; did not their
shames

Affright you? Did our old lamenting Thames
Delight you? Did ye never cluster round
Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,
And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu
To regions where no more the laurel grew?
Or did ye stay to give a welcoming
To some lone spirits who could proudly sing
Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so:
But let me think away those times of woe:
Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed
Rich benedictions o'er us; ye have wreathed
Fresh garlands: for sweet music has been
heard

In many places;—some has been upstirr'd
From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,
By a swan's ebon bill; from a thick brake,
Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild
About the earth: happy are ye and glad.

These things are doubtless: yet in truth we've
had
Strange thunders from the potency of song;
Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong,
From majesty: but in clear truth the themes
Are ugly clubs, the Poets Polyphemes
Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower
Of light is poesy; 'tis the supreme of power;
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.
The very archings of her eye-lids charm

JOHN KEATS

A thousand willing agents to obey,
 And still she governs with the mildest sway :
 But strength alone though of the Muses born
 Is like a fallen angel : trees upturn,
 Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepul-
 chres
 Delight it ; for it feeds upon the burrs,
 And thorns of life ; forgetting the great end
 Of poesy, that it should be a friend
 To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of
 man.

Yet I rejoice : a myrtle fairer than
 E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds
 Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds
 A silent space with ever sprouting green.
 All tenderest birds there find a pleasant
 screen,

Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering,
 Nibble the little cupped flowers and sing.
 Then let us clear away the choaking thorns
 From round its gentle stem ; let the young
 fawns,

Yeaned in after times, when we are flown,
 Find a fresh sward beneath it, overgrown
 With simple flowers : let there nothing be
 More boisterous than a lover's bended knee ;
 Nought more ungentle than the placid look
 Of one who leans upon a closed book ;
 Nought more untranquil than the grassy slopes
 Between two hills. All hail delightful hopes !
 As she was wont, th' imagination
 Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,
 And they shall be accounted poet kings
 Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.
 O may these joys be ripe before I die.

Will not some say that I presumptuously
 Have spoken ? that from hastening disgrace
 'Twere better far to hide my foolish face ?
 That whining boyhood should with reverence
 bow

Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach ? How !
 If I do hide myself, it sure shall be
 In the very fane, the light of Poesy :
 If I do fall, at least I will be laid
 Beneath the silence of a poplar shade ;
 And over me the grass shall be smooth shaven ;
 And there shall be a kind memorial graven.

But off Despondence ! miserable bane !
 They should not know thee, who athirst to gain
 A noble end, are thirsty every hour.
 What though I am not wealthy in the dower
 Of spanning wisdom ; though I do not know
 The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow
 Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
 Of man : though no great minist'ring reason
 sorts

Out the dark mysteries of human souls
 To clear conceiving : yet there ever rolls
 A vast idea before me, and I glean
 Therefrom my liberty ; thence too I've seen
 The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear
 As anything most true ; as that the year
 Is made of the four seasons—manifest
 As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest,
 Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I
 Be but the essence of deformity,
 A coward, did my very eye-lids wink
 At speaking out what I have dared to think.
 Ah ! rather let me like a madman run
 Over some precipice ; let the hot sun
 Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down
 Convuls'd and headlong ! Stay ! an inward
 frown

Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.
 An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle,
 Spreads awfully before me. How much toil !
 How many days ! what desperate turmoil !
 Ere I can have explored its widenesses.
 Ah, what a task ! upon my bended knees,
 I could unsay those - no, impossible !
 Impossible !

For sweet relief I'll dwell
 On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay
 Begun in gentleness die so away.
 E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades :
 I turn full hearted to the friendly aids
 That smooth the path of honour ; brotherhood,
 And friendliness the nurse of mutual good.
 The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
 Into the brain ere one can think upon it ;
 The silence when some rhymes are coming out ;
 And when they're come, the very pleasant rout :
 The message certain to be done to-morrow.
 'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow
 Some precious book from out its snug retreat,
 To cluster round it when we next shall meet.



"See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping
Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs."

(Page 147)

EPISTLE TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW

Scarce can I scribble on ; for lovely airs
Are fluttering round the room like doves in pairs ;
Many delights of that glad day recalling,
When first my senses caught their tender falling.
And with these airs come forms of elegance
Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance,
Careless, and grand—fingers soft and round
Parting luxuriant curls ;—and the swift bound
Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye
Made Ariadne's cheek look blushinglly.
Thus I remember all the pleasant flow
Of words at opening a portfolio.

Things such as these are ever harbingers
To trains of peaceful images : the stirs
Of a swan's neck unseen among the rushes :
A linnet starting all about the bushes :
A butterfly, with golden wings broad parted,
Nestling a rose, convuls'd as though it smarted
With over pleasure—many, many more,
Might I indulge at large in all my store
Of luxuries : yet I must not forget
Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet :
For what there may be worthy in these rhymes
I partly owe to him : and thus, the chimes
Of friendly voices had just given place
To as sweet a silence, when I 'gan retrace
The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease.
It was a poet's house who keeps the keys
Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung
The glorious features of the bards who sung
In other ages—cold and sacred busts
Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts
To clear Futurity his darling fame !
Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim
At swelling apples with a frisky leap
And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap
Of vine-leaves. Then there rose to view a fane
Of liny marble, and thereto a train
Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward :
One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward
The dazzling sun-rise : two sisters sweet
Bending their graceful figures till they meet
Over the trippings of a little child :
And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild
Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping.
See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping
Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs ;—
A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims

At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion
With the subsiding crystal : as when ocean
Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness
o'er

Its rocky marge, and balances once more
The patient weeds ; that now unshent by foam
Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down
At nothing ; just as though the earnest frown
Of over thinking had that moment gone
From off her brow, and left her all alone.

Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,
As if he always listened to the sighs
Of the goaded world ; and Kosciusko's worn
By horrid suffrance—mightily forlorn.
Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,
Starts at the sight of Laura ; nor can wean
His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy
they !

For over them was seen a free display
Of out-spread wings, and from between them
shone

The face of Poesy : from off her throne
She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell.
The very sense of where I was might well
Keep Sleep aloof : but more than that there came
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame
Within my breast ; so that the morning light
Surprised me even from a sleepless night ;
And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay,
Resolving to begin that very day
These lines ; and howsoever they be done,
I leave them as a father does his son.

EPISTLES

"Among the rest a shepherd (though but young
Yet hartned to his pipe) with all the skill
His few yeeres could, began to fit his quill."
Britannia's Pastorals.—BROWNE.

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW

SWEET are the pleasures that to verse
belong,
And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song ;
Nor can remembrance, Mathew ! bring to view
A fate more pleasing, a delight more true

JOHN KEATS

Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd,
Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd
To raise a trophy to the drama's muses.
The thought of this great partnership diffuses
Over the genius loving heart, a feeling
Of all that's high, and great, and good, and
healing.

Too partial friend ! fain would I follow thee
Past each horizon of fine poesy ;
Fain would I echo back each pleasant note
As o'er Sicilian seas, clear anthems float
'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted,
Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted :
But 'tis impossible ; far different cares
Beckon me sternly from soft " Lydian airs,"
And hold my faculties so long in thrall,
That I am oft in doubt whether at all
I shall again see Phœbus in the morning :
Or flush'd Aurora in the roseate dawning !
Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream ;
Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam ;
Or again witness what with thee I've seen,
The dew by fairy feet swept from the green,
After a night of some quaint jubilee
Which every elf and fay had come to see :
When bright processions took their airy march
Beneath the curved moon's triumphal arch.

But might I now each passing moment give
To the coy muse, with me she would not live
In this dark city, nor would condescend
'Mid contradictions her delights to lend.
Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind,
Ah ! surely it must be whene'er I find
Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic,
That often must have seen a poet frantic ;
Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are grow-
ing,
And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing ;
Where the dark-leav'd laburnum's drooping
clusters
Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres,
And intertwine'd the cassia's arms unite,
With its own drooping buds, but very white.
Where on one side are covert branches hung,
'Mong which the nightingales have always sung
In leafy quiet : where to pry, aloof,
Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof,

Would be to find where violet beds were nestling,
And where the bee with cowslip bells was
wrestling.

There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy,
To say " joy not too much in all that's bloomy."

Yet this is vain—O Mathew lend thy aid
To find a place where I may greet the maid—
Where we may soft humanity put on,
And sit, and rhyme and think on Chatterton ;
And that warm-hearted Shakspeare sent to
meet him

Four laurell'd spirits, heaven-ward to intreat him.
With reverence would we speak of all the sages
Who have left streaks of light athwart their
ages :

And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blind-
ness,

And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness
To those who strove with the bright golden wing
Of genius, to flap away each sting
Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could
tell

Of those who in the cause of freedom fall ;
Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell ;
Of him whose name to ev'ry heart a solace,
High-minded and unbending William Wallace.
While to the rugged north our musing turns
We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns.
Felton ! without incitements such as these,
How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease :
For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace,
And make " a sun-shine in a shady place :"
For thou wast once a flowret blooming wild,
Close to the source, bright, pure, and undefil'd,
Whence gush the streams of song : in happy
hour

Came chaste Diana from her shady bower,
Just as the sun was from the east uprising ;
And, as for him some gift she was devising,
Beheld thee, pluck'd thee, cast thee in the
stream

To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam.
I marvel much that thou hast never told
How, from a flower, into a fish of gold
Apollo chang'd thee ; how thou next didst seem
A black-eyed swan upon the widening stream ;
And when thou first didst in that mirror trace
The placid features of a human face :

EPISTLE TO GEORGE KEATS

That thou hast never told thy travels strange,
And all the wonders of the mazy range
O'er pebbly crystal, and o'er golden sands ;
Kissing thy daily food from Naiad's spearly hands.

November, 1815.

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE

FULL many a dreary hour have I past,
My brain bewilder'd, and my mind o'er-
cast

With heaviness ; in seasons when I've thought
No spherey strains by me could e'er be caught
From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze
On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays ;
Or, on the wavy grass outstretch'd supinely,
Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely :
That I should never hear Apollo's song,
Though feathery clouds were floating all along
The purple west, and, two bright streaks be-
tween,

The golden lyre itself were dimly seen :
That the still murmur of the honey bee
Would never teach a rural song to me :
That the bright glance from beauty's eyelids
slanting

• Would never make a lay of mine enchanting.
Or warm my breast with ardour to unfold
Some tale of love and arms in time of old.

But there are times, when those that love the bay,
Fly from all sorrowing far, far away ;
A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see
In water, earth, or air, but poesy.

It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it,
(For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it,)

That when a Poet is in such a trance,
In air he sees white coursers paw, and prance,
Bestriden of gay knights, in gay apparel,
Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel,
And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call,
Is the swift opening of their wide portal,
When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear,
Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's
ear.

When these enchanted portals open wide,
And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide,
The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls,

And view the glory of their festivals :
Their ladies fair, that in the distance seem
Fit for the silv'ring of a seraph's dream ;
Their rich brimm'd goblets, that incessant run
Like the bright spots that move about the sun ;
And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar
Pours with the lustre of a falling star.
Yet further off, are dimly seen their bowers,
Of which, no mortal eye can reach the flowers ;
And 'tis right just, for well Apollo knows
'Twould make the Poet quarrel with the rose.
All that's reveal'd from that far seat of blisses,
Is, the clear fountains' interchanging kisses,
As gracefully descending, light and thin,
Like silver streaks across a dolphin's fin,
When he upswimmeth from the coral caves,
And sports with half his tail above the waves.

These wonders strange he sees, and many more,
Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore.
Should he upon an evening ramble fare
With forehead to the soothing breezes bare,
Would he naught see but the dark, silent blue
With all its diamonds trembling through and
through ?

Or the coy moon, when in the waviness
Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress,
And staidly paces higher up, and higher,
Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire ?
Ah, yes ! much more would start into his sight—
The revelries, and mysteries of night—
And should I ever see them, I will tell you
Such tales as needs must with amazement spell
you.

These are the living pleasures of the bard :
But richer far posterity's award.
What does he murmur with his latest breath,
While his proud eye looks through the film of
death ?

“What though I leave this dull, and earthly
mould,

Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
With after times.—The patriot shall feel
My stern alarm, and unsheath his steel ;
Or, in the senate thunder out my numbers
To startle princes from their easy slumbers.
The sage will mingle with each moral theme
My happy thoughts sententious ; he will teem

JOHN KEATS

With lofty periods when my verses fire him,
And then I'll stoop from heaven to inspire him.
Lays have I left of such a dear delight
That maids will sing them on their bridal night.
Gay villagers, upon a morn of May,
When they have tired their gentle limbs with
play,

And form'd a snowy circle on the grass,
And plac'd in midst of all that lovely lass
Who chosen is their queen,—with her fine head
Crowned with flowers purple, white and red :
For there the lily, and the musk-rose, sighing,
Are emblems true of hapless lovers dying :
Between her breasts, that never yet felt trouble,
A bunch of violets full blown, and double,
Serenely sleep :—she from a casket takes
A little book,—and then a joy awakes
About each youthful heart,—with stifled cries
And rubbing of white hands, and sparkling eyes :
For she's to read a tale of hopes, and fears ;
One that I foster'd in my youthful years :
The pearls, that on each glist'ning circlet sleep,
Gush ever and anon with silent creep,
Lured by the innocent dimples. To sweet rest
Shall the dear babe, upon its mother's breast,
Be lull'd with songs of mine. Fair world
adieu !

Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view :
Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions,
Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions.
Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air,
That my soft verse will charm thy daughters
fair,

And warm thy sons ! " Ah, my dear friend and
brother,

Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother,
For tasting joys like these, sure I should be
Happier, and dearer to society.

At times, 'tis true, I've felt relief from pain
When some bright thought has darted through
my brain :

Through all that day I've felt a greater pleasure
Than if I'd brought to light a hidden treasure.
As to my sonnets, though none else should heed
them,

I feel delighted, still, that you should read them.
Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment,
Stretch'd on the grass at my best lov'd employ-
ment

Of scribbling lines for you. These things I
thought

While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught.
E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers
Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet
coats ;

So pert and useless, that they bring to mind
The scarlet coats that pester human-kind.
And on the other side, outspread, is seen
Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and
green.

Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now
Mark the bright silver curling round her prow.
I see the lark down-dropping to his nest,
And the broad winged sea-gull never at rest ;
For when no more he spreads his feathers free,
His breast is dancing on the restless sea.
Now I direct my eyes into the west,
Which at this moment is in sunbeams drest :
Why westward turn ? 'Twas but to say adieu !
'Twas but to kiss my hand, dear George, to you !

August, 1816.

TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE

OFT have you seen a swan superbly
frowning,
And with proud breast his own white
shadow crowning ;

He slants his neck beneath the waters bright
So silently, it seems a beam of light
Come from the galaxy : anon he sports,—
With outspread wings the Naiad Zephyr courts,
Or ruffles all the surface of the lake
In striving from its crystal face to take
Some diamond water drops, and them to treasure
In milky nest, and sip them off at leisure.
But not a moment can he there insure them,
Nor to such downy rest can he allure them ;
For down they rush as though they would be
free,

And drop like hours into eternity.
Just like that bird am I in loss of time,
Whene'er I venture on the stream of rhyme ;

EPISTLE TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE

With shatter'd boat, oar snapt, and canvass rent,
I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent ;
Still scooping up the water with my fingers,
In which a trembling diamond never lingers.

By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see
Why I have never penn'd a line to thee :
Because my thoughts were never free, and clear,
And little fit to please a classic ear ;
Because my wine was of too poor a savour
For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour
Of sparkling Helicon :—small good it were
To take him to a desert rude, and bare,
Who had on Baïæ's shore reclin'd at ease,
While Tasso's page was floating in a breeze
That gave soft music from Armida's bowers,
Mingled with fragrance from her rarest flowers :
Small good to one who had by Mulla's stream
Fondled the maidens with the breasts of cream ;
Who had beheld Belphebe in a brook,
And lovely Una in a leafy nook,
And Archimago leaning o'er his book :
Who had of all that's sweet tasted, and seen,
From silv'ry ripple, up to beauty's queen ;
From the sequester'd haunts of gay Titania,
To the blue dwelling of divine Urania :
One, who, of late, had ta'en sweet forest walks
With him who elegantly chats, and talks—
The wrong'd Libertas,—who has told you stories
Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories ;
Of troops chivalrous prancing through a city,
And tearful ladies made for love, and pity :
With many else which I have never known.
Thus have I thought ; and days on days have
flown

Slowly, or rapidly—unwilling still
For you to try my dull, unlearned quill.
Nor should I now, but that I've known you
long ;

That you first taught me all the sweets of
song :

The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the
fine ;

What swell'd with pathos, and what right
divine :

Spenserian vowels that clope with ease,
And float along like birds o'er summer seas ;
Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tender-
ness ;

Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair
slenderness.

Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly
Up to its climax and then dying proudly ?
Who found for me the grandeur of the ode,
Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load ?
Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,
The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram ?
Show'd me that epic was of all the king,
Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's
ring ?

You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty,
And pointed out the patriot's stern duty ;
The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell ;
The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell
Upon a tyrant's head. Ah ! had I never seen
Or known your kindness, what might I have
been ?

What my enjoyments in my youthful years,
Bereft of all that now my life endears ?
And can I e'er these benefits forget ?
And can I e'er repay the friendly debt ?
No, doubly no ;—yet should these rhymings
please,

I shall roll on the grass with two-fold ease :
For I have long time been my fancy feeding
With hopes that you would one day think the
reading

Of my rough verses not an hour misspent ;
Should it e'er be so, what a rich content !
Some weeks have pass'd since last I saw the
spires

In lucid Thames reflected : warm desires
To see the sun o'erpeep the eastern dimness,
And morning shadows streaking into slinness
Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water ;
To mark the time as they grow broad, and
shorter ;

To feel the air that plays about the hills,
And sips its freshness from the little rills ;
To see high, golden corn wave in the light
When Cynthia smiles upon a summer's night
And peers among the cloudlets jet and white,
As though she were reclining in a bed
Of bean blossoms, in heaven freshly shed.

No sooner had I stepp'd into these pleasures
Than I began to think of rhymes and measures :
The air that floated by me seem'd to say
" Write ! thou wilt never have a better day."

JOHN KEATS

And so I bid. When many lines I'd written,
Though with their grace I was not oversmitten,
Yet, as my hand was warm, I thought I'd better
Trust to my feelings, and write you a letter.
Such an attempt requir'd an inspiration
Of a peculiar sort,—a consummation ;—
Which had I felt, these scribblings might have
been

Verses from which the soul would never wean :
But many days have passed since last my heart
Was warm'd luxuriously by divine Mozart ;
By Arne delighted, or by Handel madden'd ;
Or by the song of Erin pierc'd and sadden'd :
What time you were before the music sitting,
And the rich notes to each sensation fitting.
Since I have walk'd with you through shady
lanes

That freshly terminate in open plains,
And revel'd in a chat that ceased not
When at night-fall among your books we got :
No, nor when supper came, nor after that,—
Nor when reluctantly I took my hat ;
No, nor till cordially you shook my hand
Mid-way between our homes :—your accents
bland

Still sounded in my ears, when I no more
Could hear your footsteps touch the grav'ly floor.
Sometimes I lost them, and then found again ;
You chang'd the footpath for the grassy plain.
In those still moments I have wish'd you joys
That well you know to honor :—" Life's very
toys

With him," said I, " will take a pleasant charm ;
It cannot be that ought will work him harm."
These thoughts now come o'er me with all
their might :—

Again I shake your hand,—friend Charles,
good night.

September, 1816.

TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS

DEAR Reynolds! as last night I lay in
bed,

There came before my eyes that
wonted thread
Of shapes, and shadows, and remembrances,
That every other minute vex and please :

Things all disjointed come from north and
south,—

Two Witch's eyes above a Cherub's mouth,
Voltaire with casque and shield and habergeon,
And Alexander with his nightcap on ;
Old Socrates a-tying his cravat,
And Hazlitt playing with Miss Edgeworth's Cat ;
And Junius Brutus, pretty well so so,
Making the best of 's way towards Soho.

Few are there who escape these visitings,—
Perhaps one or two whose lives have patent
wings,

And thro' whose curtains peeps no hellish nose,
No wild-boar tushes, and no Mermaid's toes ;
But flowers bursting out with lusty pride,
And young Æolian harps personified ;
Some Titian colours touch'd into real life,—
The sacrifice goes on ; the pontiff knife
Gleams in the Sun, the milk-white heifer lows,
The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows :
A white sail shows above the green-head cliff,
Moves round the point, and throws her anchor
stiff ;

The mariners join hymn with those on land.

You know the Enchanted Castle,—it doth
stand

Upon a rock, on the border of a Lake,
Nested in trees, which all do seem to shake
From some old magic-like Urganda's Sword.
O Phœbus! that I had thy sacred word
To show this Castle in fair dreaming wise,
Unto my friend, while sick and ill he lies!

You know it well enough, where it doth seem
A mossy place, a Merlin's Hall, a dream ;
You know the clear Lake, and the little Isles,
The mountains blue, and cold near neighbour
rills,

All which elsewhere are but half animate ;
There do they look alive to love and hate,
To smiles and frowns ; they seem a lifted mound
Above some giant, pulsing underground.

Part of the Building was a chosen Sec,
Built by a banished Santon of Chaldee ;
The other part, two thousand years from him,
Was built by Cuthbert de Saint Aldebrim ;

EPISTLE TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS

Then there's a little wing, far from the Sun,
Built by a Lapland Witch turn'd maudlin
Nun ;
And many other juts of aged stone
Founded with many a mason-devil's groan.

The doors all look as if they oped themselves,
The windows as if latched by Fays and Elves,
And from them comes a silver flash of light,
As from the westward of a Summer's night ;
Or like a beauteous woman's large blue eyes
Gone mad thro' olden songs and poesies.

See ! what is coming from the distance dim !
A golden Galley all in silken trim !
Three rows of oars are lightening, moment
whiles,
Into the verd'rous bosoms of those isles ;
Towards the shade, under the Castle wall,
It comes in silence,—now 'tis hidden all.
The Clarion sounds, and from a Postern-gate
An echo of sweet music doth create
A fear in the poor Herdsman, who doth bring
His beasts to trouble the enchanted spring,—
He tells of the sweet music, and the spot,
To all his friends, and they believe him not.

O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
Would all their colours from the sunset take :
From something of material sublime,
Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time
In the dark void of night. For in the world
We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurl'd
On the Admiral-staff,—and so philosophize
I dare not yet ! Oh, never will the prize,
High reason, and the love of good and ill,
Be my award ! Things cannot to the will

Be settled, but they tease us out of thought :
Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven ? It is a flaw
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.

Dear Reynolds ! I have a mysterious tale,
And cannot speak it : the first page I read
Upon a Lampit rock of green sea weed
Among the breakers ; 'twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand ; I was at home
And should have been most happy,—but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore.—
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
Still am I sick of it, and tho', to-day,
I've gather'd young spring-leaves, and flowers
gay
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,—
The Shark at savage prey,—the Hawk at
pounce,—
The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
Ravening a worm,—Away, ye horrid moods !
Moods of one's mind ! You know I hate them
well,
You know I'd sooner be a clapping Bell
To some Kamtschatcan Missionary Church,
Than with these horrid moods be left i' the
lurch.

ODES

TO A NIGHTINGALE

I

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness
pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I
had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had
sunk :
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the
trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singing of summer in full-throated ease.

2

O, for a draught of vintage ! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delv'd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt
mirth !
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth ;
That I might drink, and leave the world un-
seen,
And with thee fade away into the forest
dim :

2

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never
known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other
groan ;

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin,
and dies ;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-
morrow.

4

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :
 Already with thee! tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;
 But here there is no light,
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes
 blown
 Through verdurous glooms and winding
 mossy ways.

5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the
boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer
eyes.

e

Darling I listen ; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath ;

ON A GRECIAN URN

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul
abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in
vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick
for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the
foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

8

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still
stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried
deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

ON A GRECIAN URN

1

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow
time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens
loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild
ecstasy?

2

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not
leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not
grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

3

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

4

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands
drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

JOHN KEATS

5

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou
say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

TO AUTUMN

1

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing
sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-
eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel
shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy
cells.

2

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy
hook
Spare the next swath and all its twined
flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by
hours.

3

Where are, the songs of Spring? Ay, where
are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music
too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly
bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble
soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the
skies.

MELANCHOLY

1

NO, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its
poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy
owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the
soul.

2

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless
eyes.

INDOLENCE

3

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty[•] that must
die ;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu ; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose
screnuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine ;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

INDOLENCE

"They toil not, neither do they spin."

1

ONE morn before me were three figures
seen,
With bowed necks, and joined hands,
side-faced ;
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced ;
They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side ;
They came again ; as when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades
return ;
And they were strange to me, as may betide
With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

2

How is it, Shadows ! that I knew ye not ?
How came ye muffled in so hush a mask ?
Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
To steal away, and leave without a task
My idle days ? Ripe was the drowsy
hour ;
The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
Benumb'd my eyes ; my pulse grew less and less ;
Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath
no flower :
O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness ?

3

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
Each one the face a moment whiles to me ;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
And ached for wings, because I knew the
three ;
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her
name ;
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
And ever watchful with fatigued eye ;
The last, whom I love more, the more of
blame
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

4

They faded, and, forsooth ! I wanted wings :
O folly ! What is Love ? and where is it ?
And for that poor Ambition ! it springs
From a man's little heart's short fever-fit ;
For Poesy !—no,—she has not a joy,—
At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
And evenings steep'd in honied indolence ;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
That I may never know how change the
moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense !

5

And once more came they by ;—alas ! where-
fore ?
My sleep had been embroider'd with dim
dreams ;
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled
beams :
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May ;
The open casement press'd a new-leaved vine,
Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay ;
O Shadows ! 'twas a time to bid farewell !
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

6

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu ! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass ;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce !

JOHN KEATS

Fade softly from my eyes, and be once
more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn ;
Farewell ! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store ;
Vanish, ye Phantoms ! from my idle spright,
Into the clouds, and never more return !

TO PSYCHE

O GODDESS ! hear these tuneless
numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remem-
brance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conched ear :
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes ?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whispering
roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there
ran
A brooklet, scarce espied :

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass ;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions
too ;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade
adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurean love :
The winged boy I knew ;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove ?
His Psyche true !

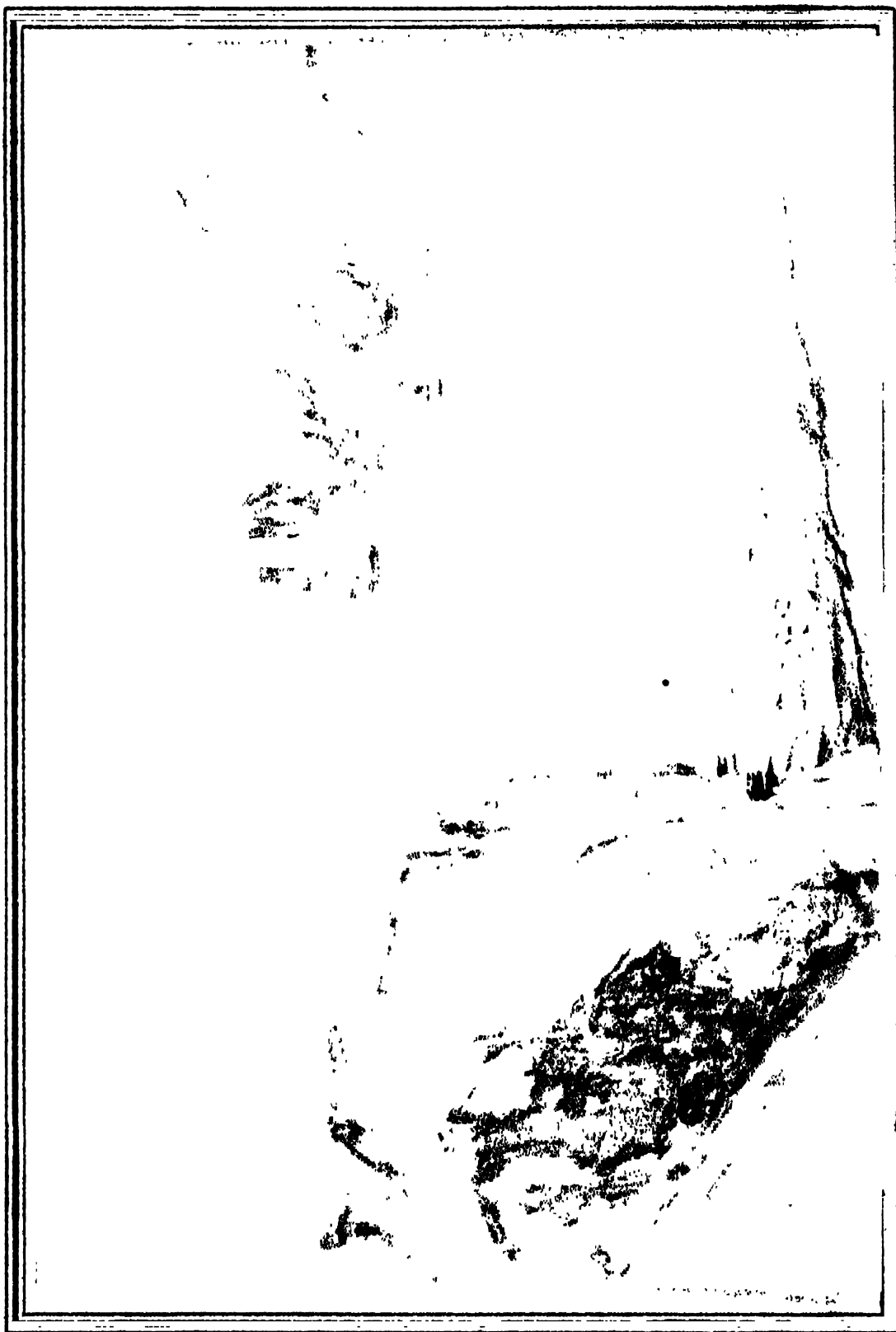
O latest born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy !
Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-regioned star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;

Fairer than these, though temple thou hast
none, *

Nor altar heap'd with flowers ;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours ;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming ;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest ! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire ;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours ;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swung censer teeming ;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with
pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind :
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees,
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by
steep ;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and
bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to
sleep ;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a
name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the
same ;
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in !



"The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,—
Its voice mysterious, . . ."

(Page 160)

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA

MOTHER of Hermes! and still youth-
ful Maia!
May I sing to thee
As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiæ?
Or may I woo thee
In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles

Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan?
O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
Save of the quiet primrose, and the span
Of heaven and few cars,
Rounded by thee, my song should die away
Content as theirs,
Rich in the simple worship of a day.

SONNETS

I

IF by dull rhymes our English must be
chain'd,
And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness;
Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,
Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked foot of poesy;
Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the
stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
By ear industrious, and attention meet;
Misers of sound and syllable, no less
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath
crown;
So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
She will be bound with garlands of her
own.

II

TO LEIGH HUNT

GLORY and loveliness have passed away;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathed incense do we see up-
borne
Into the east, to meet the smiling day:
No crowd of nymphs soft voic'd and young,
and gay,
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May.
But there are left delights as high as these,
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time, when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like
thee.

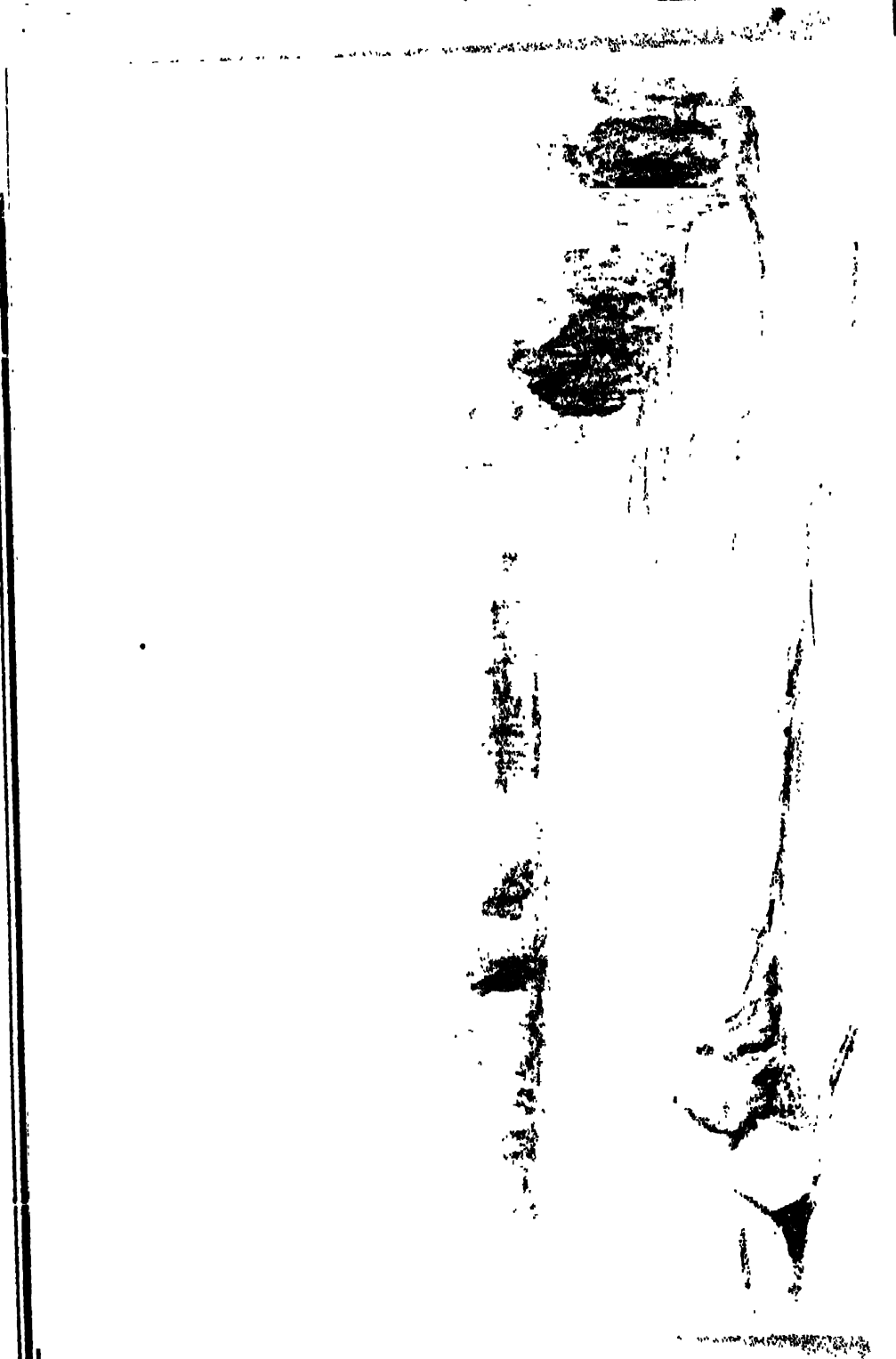
III

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE

MANY the wonders I this day have
seen:
The sun, when first he kist away
the tears
That fill'd the eyes of morn;—the laurel'd
peers
Who from the feathery gold of evening lean;—
The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its
fears—
Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears
Must think on what will be, and what has been.
E'en now, dear George, while this for you I write,
Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping
So scantily, that it seems her bridal night,
And she her half-discover'd revels keeping.
But what, without the social thought of thee,
Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

IV

HOW many bards gild the lapses of time!
A few of them have ever been the
fool
Of my delighted fancy,—I could brood
Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime:
And often, when I sit me down to rhyme,
These will in throngs before my mind in-
trude:
But no confusion, no disturbance rude
Do they occasion; 'tis a pleasing chime.
So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store!
The songs of birds—the whisp'ring of the
leaves—
The voice of waters—the great bell that heaves
With solemn sound,—and thousand others more,
That distance of recognizance bereaves,
Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.



**"So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store:
The songs of birds—the whispering of the leaves—
The voice of waters—the great bell that heaves
With solemn sound,—and thousand others more,
That distance of recognition bereaves,
Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar."**

(Page 160)

SONNETS

V

TO G. A. W.

NYMPH of the downward smile, and
 sidelong glance,
 In what diviner moments of the day
 Art thou most lovely?—when gone far astray
 Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance,
 Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance
 Of sober thought?—or when starting away
 With careless robe, to meet the morning ray,
 Thou spar'st the flowers in thy mazy dance?
 Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly,
 And so remain, because thou listenest :
 But thou to please wert nurtured so completely
 That I can never tell what mood is best.
 I shall as soon pronounce which Grace more
 neatly
 Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

VI

TO MY BROTHERS

SMALL, busy flames play through the
 fresh laid coals,
 And their faint cracklings o'er our
 silence creep
 Like whispers of the household gods that keep
 A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
 And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles,
 Your eyes are fix'd, as in poetic sleep,
 Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
 That aye at fall of night our care condole.
 This is your birth-day, Tom, and I rejoice
 That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.
 Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise
 May we together pass, and calmly try
 What are this world's true joys,—ere the great
 voice,
 From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly.

VII

GREAT spirits now on earth are sojourn-
 ing ;
 He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
 Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
 Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing :

He of the rose, the violet, the spring.
 The social smile, the chain for Freedom's
 sake ;
 And lo!—whose stedfastness would never take
 A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
 And other spirits there are standing apart
 Upon the forehead of the age to come ;
 These, these will give the world another heart,
 And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum
 Of mighty workings?—
 Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

VIII

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

THE poetry of earth is never dead :
 When all the birds are faint with the
 hot sun,
 And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
 From hedge to hedge about the new-mown
 mead ;
 That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
 In summer luxury,—he has never done
 With his delights; for when tired out with fun
 He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
 The poetry of earth is ceasing never :
 On a lone winter evening, when the frost
 Has wrought a silence, from the stove there
 shrills
 The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
 And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
 The Grasshopper's among some grassy
 hills.

December 30, 1816.

IX

KEEN, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and
 there
 Among the bushes half leafless, and
 dry ;
 The stars look very cold about the sky,
 And I have many miles on foot to fare.
 Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air,
 Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily,
 Or of those silver lamps that burn on high,
 Or of the distance from home's pleasant lair :

JOHN KEATS

For I am brimfull of the friendliness
That in a little cottage I have found ;
Of fair-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress,
And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd ;
Of lovely Laura in her light green dress,
And faithful Petrarch gloriously crown'd.

X

TO one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a
prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's
content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment ?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by :
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

XI

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of
gold,
And many goodly states and king-
doms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his
demesne ;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and
bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

XII

TO HOMER

STANDING aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs per-
chance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So thou wast blind !—but then the veil was rent ;
For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spermy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive ;
Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green ;
There is a budding morrow in midnight,—
There is a triple sight in blindness keen ;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and
Hell.

XIII

AFTER dark vapours have oppress'd our
plains
For a long dreary season, comes a day
Born of the gentle South, and clears away
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.
The anxious month, relieved of its pains,
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May,
The eye-lids with the passing coolness play,
Like rose-leaves with the drip of summer rains.
And calmest thoughts come round us—as of
leaves
Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—autumn
suns
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves,—
Sweet Sappho's cheek,—a sleeping infant's
breath,—
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass
runs,—
A woodland rivulet,—a Poet's death.

XIV

ON "THE FLOWRE AND THE LEFE"

THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse :
The honied lines so freshly interlace,
To keep the reader in so sweet a
place,
So that he here and there full-hearted stops ;

SONNETS

And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
 Come cool and suddenly against his face,
 And, by the wandering melody, may trace
 Which way the tender-legged linnet hops.
 Oh! what a power has white simplicity!
 What mighty power has this gentle story!
 I, that do ever feel athirst for glory,
 Could at this moment be content to lie
 Meekly upon the grass, as those whose
 sobbings
 Were heard of none beside the mournful
 robins.

XV

ON SITTING DOWN TO READ KING LEAR
 ONCE AGAIN

O GOLDEN-TONGUED Romance
 with serene lute!
 Fair plumed Syren! Queen of far
 away!
 Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
 Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute:
 Adieu! for once again the fierce dispute,
 Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
 Must I burn through; once more humbly
 assay
 The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit.
 Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,
 Begetters of our deep eternal theme,
 When through the old oak forest I am
 gone,
 Let me not wander in a barren dream,
 But when I am consumed in the fire,
 Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire.

XVI

SPENSER! a jealous honourer of thine,
 A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
 Did, last eve, ask my promise to refine
 Some English, that might strive thine ear to
 please.
 But, Elfin-poet! 'tis impossible
 For an inhabitant of wintry earth
 To rise, like Phœbus, with a golden quell,
 Fire-wing'd, and make a morning in his mirth.

It is impossible to 'scape from toil
 O' the sudden, and receive thy spiriting:
 The flower must drink the nature of the soil
 Before it can put forth its blossoming:
 Be with me in the summer days, and I
 Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.

XVII

TO THE NILE

SON of the old moon-mountains African!
 Stream of the Pyramid and Crocodile!
 We call thee fruitful, and, that very while
 A desert fills our seeing's inward span.
 Nurse of swart nations since the world began,
 Art thou so fruitful? or dost thou beguile
 Those men to honour thee, who, worn with
 toil,
 Rest them a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan?
 O may dark fancies err! They surely do;
 'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
 Of all beyond itself. Thou dost bedew
 Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste
 The pleasant sun-rise. Green isles hast thou
 too,
 And to the sea as happily dost haste.

XVIII

ON THE SEA

IT keeps eternal whisperings around
 Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
 Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the
 spell
 Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
 Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
 That scarcely will the very smallest shell
 Be moved for days from where it sometime
 fell,
 When last the winds of heaven were unbound.
 O ye! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tired,
 Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
 O ye! whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,
 Or fed too much with cloying melody,—
 Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood
 Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quired!

JOHN KEATS

XIX

ON SEEING THE ELGIN MARBLES FOR THE
FIRST TIME

MY spirit is too weak ; mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling
sleep,
And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep,
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an indescribable feud ;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main,
A sun, a shadow of a magnitude.

XX

ON VISITING THE TOMB OF BURNS

THE town, the churchyard, and the
setting sun,
The clouds, the trees, the rounded
hills all seem,
Though beautiful, cold—strange—as in a dream,
I dreamed long ago, now new begun.
The short-lived paly Summer is but won
From Winter's ague, for one hour's gleam ;
Though sapphire-warm, their stars do never
beam :
All is cold Beauty ; pain is never done :
For who has mind to relish, Minos-wise,
The Real of Beauty, free from that dead hue
Sickly imagination and sick pride
Cast wan upon it ! Burns ! with honour due
I oft have honour'd thee. Great shadow ! hide
Thy face ; I sin against thy native skies.

XXI

TO AILSA ROCK

HEARKEN, thou craggy ocean-pyramid,
Give answer by thy voice—the sea-
fowls' screams !
When were thy shoulders mantled in huge
streams ?
When from the sun was thy broad forehead hid ?

How long ! 't since the mighty Power bid
Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom
dreams—

Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams—
Or when grey clouds are thy cold coverlid !
Thou answer'st not ; for thou art dead
asleep.

Thy life is but two dead eternities,
The last in air, the former in the deep !
First with the whales, last with the eagle-
skies !

Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee
steep,
Another cannot wake thy giant size !

XXII

BEN NEVIS

READ me a lesson, Muse, and speak it
loud
Upon the top of Nevis, blind in
mist !
I looked into the chasms, and a shroud
Vaporous doth hide them,—just so much I
wist
Mankind do know of hell ; I look o'erhead,
And there is sullen mist, —even so much
Mankind can tell of heaven ; mist is spread
Before the earth, beneath me,—even such,
Even so vague is man's sight of himself !
Here are the craggy stones beneath my feet,—
Thus much I know that, a poor witless elf,
I tread on them,—that all my eye doth meet
Is mist and crag, not only on this height,
But in the world of thought and mental might !

XXIII

ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER

COME hither all sweet maidens soberly,
Down-looking eye, and with
chasten'd light
Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
And meekly let your fair hands joined be,
As if so gentle that ye could not see,
Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,
Sinking away to his young spirit's night,

SONNETS

Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea :
 'Tis young Leander toiling to his death ;
 Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
 For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her
 smile.

O horrid dream ! see how his body dips,
 Dead-heavy ; arms and shoulders gleam awhile :
 He's gone ; up bubbles all his amorous breath !

XXIV

BLUE ! 'tis the life of heaven,—the
 domain
 Of Cynthia,—the wide palace of the
 sun,—

The tent of Hesperus, and all his train,
 The bosomer of clouds, gold, grey, and dun.
 Blue ! 'Tis the life of waters—ocean

And all its vassal streams : pools numberless,
 May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
 Subside, if not to dark blue nativeness.

Blue ! Gentle cousin of the forest-green,
 Married to green in all the sweetest flowers—
 Forget-me-not, — the blue-bell, — and, that
 queen

Of secrecy, the violet : what strange powers
 Hast thou, as a mere shadow ! But how great,
 When in an Eye thou art, alive with fate !

XXV

THE HUMAN SEASONS

FOUR Seasons fill the measure of the year ;
 There are four seasons in the mind of
 man :

He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear

Takes in all beauty with an easy span :

He has his Summer, when luxuriously

Spring's honied cud of youthful thought he
 loves

• To ruminate, and by such dreaming high

Is nearest unto Heaven : quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings

He furleth close ; contented so to look

On mists in idleness—to let fair things

Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.

He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,

Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

XXVI

TIME'S sea hath been five years at its
 slow ebb ;

Long hours have to and fro let creep
 the sand ;

Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,

And snared by the ungloving of thine hand.

And yet I never look on midnight sky,

But I behold thine eyes' well memoried light ;

I cannot look upon the rose's dye,

But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight ;

I cannot look on any budding flower,

But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips,

And hearkening for a love-sound, doth devour

Its sweets in the wrong sense :—Thou dost
 eclipse

Every delight with sweet remembering,

And grief unto my darling joys dost bring.

XXVII

AS Hermes once took to his feathers light,
 When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon'd
 and slept,

So on a Delphic feed, my idle spright,

So play'd so charm'd, so conquer'd, so bereft

The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes ;

And seeing it asleep, so fled away,

Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,

Nor unto Tempe, where Jove grieved a day ;

But to that second circle of sad Hell,

Where in the gust, the whirlwind, and the
 flaw

Of rain and hail stones, lovers need not tell

Their sorrows,—pale were the sweet lips I
 saw,

Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form

I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

XXVIII

ON LAMB

HOW fever'd is the man, who cannot look
 Upon his mortal days with temperate
 blood,

Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book,

And robs his fair name of its maidenhood ;

JOHN KEATS

It is as if the rose should pluck herself,
 Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom,
 As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,
 Should darken her pure grot with muddy
 gloom ;
 But the rose leaves herself upon the briar,
 For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed,
 And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire ;
 The undisturbed lake has crystal space ;
 Why then should man, teasing the world for
 grace,
 Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed ?

XXIX

WHEN I have fears that I may cease
 to be
 Before my pen has glean'd my teeming
 brain,
 Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,
 Hold like full garnerers the full-ripen'd grain ;
 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
 - Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
 And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of
 chance ;
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour !
 That I shall never look upon thee more,
 Never have relish in the faery power
 Of unreflecting love !—then on the shore
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,
 Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

XXX

WHY did I laugh to-night ? No voice
 will tell :
 No God, no Demon of severe
 response,
 Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell.
 Then to my human heart I turn at once.
 Heart ! Thou and I are here, sad and alone ;
 Say, wherefore did I laugh ? O mortal
 pain !
 O Darkness ! Darkness ! ever must I moan,
 To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in
 vain.

Why did I laugh ? I know this Being's lease,
 My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads ;
 Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
 And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds ;
 Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
 But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed.

XXXI

I CRY your mercy—pity—love!—aye, love!
 Merciful love that tantalises not,
 One-thoughted, never-wandering, guile-
 less love,
 Unmask'd, and being seen—without a blot !
 O ! let me have thee whole,—all—all—be mine!
 That shape, that fairness, that sweet minor
 zest
 Of love, your kiss,—those hands, those eyes
 divine,
 That warm, white, lucent, million-pleasured
 breast,—
 Yourself—your soul—in pity give me all,
 Withhold no atom's atom or I die,
 Or living on, perhaps, your wretched thrall,
 Forget, in the mist of idle misery,
 Life's purposes,—the palate of my mind
 Losing its gust, and my ambition blind !

XXXII

O SOFT embalmer of the still midnight !
 Shutting, with careful fingers and
 benign,
 Our gloom-pleased eyes, embower'd from the
 light,
 Enshaded in forgetfulness divine ;
 O soothest Sleep ! if so it please thee, close,
 In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
 Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
 Around my bed its lulling charities ;
 Then save me, or the passed day will shine
 Upon my pillow, breeding many woes ;
 Save me from curious conscience, that still
 lords
 Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole ;
 Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
 And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

SONNETS

XXXIII

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are
 gone!
 Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and
 softer breast,
 Warm breath, tranced whisper, tender semi-tone,
 Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous
 waist!
 Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,
 When the dusk holiday—or holinight
 Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave
 The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
 Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
 Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
 Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
 Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, para-
 dise—
 But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
 He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

XXXIV

BRIGHT star! would I were steadfast as
 thou art—
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the
 night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like Nature's patient, sleepless Eremité,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human
 shores,
 Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the
 moors—
 No—yet still steadfast, till unchangeable,
 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

LYRICAL POEMS

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

1

O WHAT can ail thee, Knight at arms,
Alone and palely loitering ;
The sedge has wither'd from the Lake,
And no birds sing !

2

O what can ail thee, Knight at arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone ?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

3

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew ;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

4

I met a Lady in the Meads
Full beautiful, a faery's child ;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

5

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone.
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

6

I set her on my pacing steed
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend and sing
A faery's song.

7

She found me roots of relish sweet
And honey wild and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said
I love thee true.

8

She took me to her elfin grot
And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

9

And there she lulled me asleep
And there I dream'd, Ah Woe betide !
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

10

I saw pale Kings, and Princes too,
Pale warriors, death pale were they all ;
They cried La belle dame sans merci
Thee hath in thrall !

11

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

12

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering ;
Though the sedge is withered from the Lake,
And no birds sing.

FANCY

FANCY

EVER let the Fancy roam,
 Pleasure never is at home :
 At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth ;
 Then let winged Fancy wander
 Through the thought still spread beyond her :
 Open wide the mind's cage-door,
 She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
 O sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
 Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
 And the enjoying of the Spring
 Fades as does its blossoming ;
 Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,
 Blushing through the mist and dew,
 Cloy with tasting : What do then ?
 Sit thee by the ingle, when
 The sear faggot blazes bright,
 Spirit of a winter's night ;
 When the soundless earth is muffled,
 And the caked snow is shuffled
 From the ploughboy's heavy shoon ;
 When the Night doth meet the Noon
 In a dark conspiracy
 To banish Even from her sky.
 Sit thee there, and send abroad,
 With a mind self overaw'd,
 Fancy, high-commission'd :—send her !
 She has vassals to attend her :
 She will bring, in spite of frost,
 Beauties that the earth hath lost ;
 She will bring thee, all together,
 All delights of summer weather ;
 All the buds and bells of May,
 From dewy sward or thorny spray ;
 All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
 With a still, mysterious stealth :
 She will mix these pleasures up
 Like three fit wines in a cup,
 And thou shalt quaff it :—thou shalt hear
 Distant harvest-carols clear ;
 Rustle of the reaped corn ;
 Sweet birds antheing the morn :
 And, in the same moment—hark !
 'Tis the early April lark,
 Or the rooks, with busy caw,
 Foraging for sticks and straw.

Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
 The daisy and the marigold ;
 White-plum'd lilies, and the first
 Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;
 Shaded hyacinth, alway
 Sapphire queen of the mid-May ;
 And every leaf, and every flower
 Pearled with the self-same shower.
 Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
 Meagre from its celled sleep ;
 And the snake all winter thin
 Cast on sunny bank its skin ;
 Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
 Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
 When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
 Quiet on her mossy nest ;
 Then the hurry and alarm
 When the bee-hive casts its swarm,
 Acorns ripe down-pattering,
 While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
 Every thing is spoilt by use :
 Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
 Too much gaz'd at ? Where's the maid
 Whose lip matre is ever new ?
 Where's the eye, however blue,
 Doth not weary ? Where's the face
 One would meet in every place ?
 Where's the voice, however soft,
 One would hear so very oft ?
 At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
 Let, then, winged Fancy find
 Thee a mistress to thy mind :
 Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
 Ere the God of Torment taught her
 How to frown and how to chide ;
 With a waist and with a side
 White as Hebe's, when her zone
 Slipt its golden clasp, and down
 Fell her kirtle to her feet,
 While she held the goblet sweet,
 And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
 Of the Fancy's silken leash ;
 Quickly break her prison-string
 And such joys as these she'll bring.—
 Let the winged Fancy roam,
 Pleasure never is at home.

JOHN KEATS

SONG

I HAD a dove, and the sweet dove died ;
And I have thought it died of grieving :
O, what could it grieve for ? Its feet were
tied
With a silken thread of my own hand's weaving ;
Sweet little red feet ! Why should you die—
Why should you leave me, sweet bird ! why ?
You liv'd alone in the forest-tree,
Why, pretty thing ! would you not live with me ?
I kiss'd you oft and gave you white peas ;
Why not live sweetly, as in the green trees ?

FAERY SONG

S HED no tear ! oh shed no tear !
The flower will bloom another year.
Weep no more ! oh weep no more !
Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
Dry your eyes ! oh dry your eyes !
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies—
Shed no tear.

Overhead ! look overhead !
'Mong the blossoms white and red—
Look up, look up. I flutter now
On this flush pomegranate bough.
See me ! 'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill.
Shed no tear ! Oh shed no tear !
The flower will bloom another year.
Adieu, adieu !—I fly, adieu !
I vanish in the heaven's blue—
Adieu ! Adieu !

DAISY'S SONG

T HE sun, with his great eye,
Sees not so much as I ;
And the moon, all silver-proud,
Might as well be in a cloud.

2

And O the spring—the spring
I lead the life of a king !
Couch'd in the teeming grass,
I spy each pretty lass.

3

I look where no one dares,
And I stare where no one stares,
And when the night is nigh,
Lambs bleat my lullaby.

FRAGMENT

W HERE'S the Poet ? show him ! show
him,
Muses nine ! that I may know him
'Tis the man who with a man
Is an equal, be he King,
Or poorest of the beggar-clan,
Or any other wondrous thing
A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato ;
'Tis the man who with a bird,
Wren, or Eagle, finds its way to
All its instincts ; he hath heard
The Lion's roaring, and can tell
What his horny throat expresseth,
And to him the Tiger's yell
Comes articulate and presseth
On his ear like mother-tongue.

WELCOME JOY, AND WELCOME SORROW

W ELCOME joy, and welcome sorrow
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather
Come to-day and come to-morrow
I do love you both together !

I love to mark sad faces in fair weather ;
And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder ;
Fair and foul I love together :
Meadows sweet where flames are under,
And a giggle at a wonder ;
Visage sage at pantomime ;
Funeral, and steeple-chime ;

ODE

Infant playing with a skull ;
 Morning fair, and shipwreck'd hull ;
 Nightshade with the woodbine kissing ;
 Serpents in red roses hissing ;
 Cleopatra regal-dress'd
 With the aspic at her breast ;
 Dancing music, music sad,
 Both together, sane and mad ;
 Muses bright and muses pale ;
 Sombre Saturn, Momus hale ;—
 Laugh and sigh, and laugh again ;
 Oh ! the sweetness of the pain !
 Muses bright and muses pale,
 Bare your faces of the veil ;
 Let me see ; and let me write
 Of the day and of the night—
 Both together :—let me slake
 All my thirst for sweet heart-ache ;
 Let my bower be of yew,
 Interwreath'd with myrtles new ,
 Pines and lime-trees full in bloom,
 And my couch a low grass-tomb.

WHAT THE THRUSH SAID

TO REYNOLDS

O THOU whose face hath felt the
 Winter's wind,
 Whose eye has seen the snow-clouds
 hung in mist
 And the black elm tops 'mong the freezing
 stars !
 To thee the spring will be a harvest time.
 O thou whose only book has been the light
 Of supreme darkness, which thou feddest on
 Night after night, when Phœbus was away !
 To thee the Spring shall be a triple morn.
 • O fret not after knowledge. I have none,
 And yet my song comes native with the
 warmth.
 O fret not after knowledge ! I have none,
 And yet the evening listens. He who
 saddens
 At thought of idleness cannot be idle,
 And he's awake who thinks himself asleep.

ODE

B ARDS of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth !
 Have ye souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new ?
 Yes, and those of heaven commune
 With the spheres of sun and moon ;
 With the noise of fountains wond'rous,
 And the parle of voices thund'rous ;
 With the whisper of heaven's trees
 And one another, in soft ease
 Seated on Elysian lawns
 Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns ;
 Underneath large blue-bells tented,
 Where the daisies are rose-scented,
 And the rose herself has got
 Perfume which on earth is not ;
 Where the nightingale doth sing
 Not a senseless, tranced thing,
 But divine melodious truth ;
 Philosophic numbers smooth ;
 Tales and golden histories
 Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
 On the earth ye live again ;
 And the souls ye left behind you
 Teach us, here, the way to find you,
 Where your other souls are joying,
 Never slumber'd, never cloying.
 Here, your earth-born souls still speak
 To mortals, of their little week ;
 Of their sorrows and delights ;
 Of their passions and their spite ;
 Of their glory and their shame ;
 What doth strengthen and what maim.
 Thus ye teach us, every day,
 Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth !
 Ye have souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new !

JOHN KEATS

THE MERMAID TAVERN

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign-board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw you in your glory,
Underneath a new old-sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

WRITTEN IN THE HIGHLANDS AFTER A VISIT TO BURNS'S COUNTRY

THERE is a charm in footing slow
across a silent plain,
Where patriot battle has been fought,
where glory had the gain;
There is a pleasure on the heath where Druids
old have been,
Where mantles grey have rustled by and swept
the nettles green;
There is a joy in every spot made known by
times of old,
New to the feet, although each tale a hundred
times be told;

There is a deeper joy than all, more solemn in
the heart,
More parching to the tongue than all, of more
divine a smart,
When weary steps forget themselves upon a
pleasant turf,
Upon hot sand, or flinty road, or sea-shore
iron scurf,
Toward the castle or the cot, where long ago
was born
One who was great through mortal days, and
died of fame unshorn.
Light heather-bells may tremble then, but they
are far away;
Wood-lark may sing from sandy fern,—the Sun
may hear his lay;
Runnels may kiss the grass on shelves and
shallows clear,
But their low voices are not heard, though
come on travels drear;
Blood-red the Sun may set behind black
mountain peaks;
Blue tides may sluice and drench their time in
caves and weedy creeks;
Eagles may seem to sleep wing-wide upon the air;
Ring-doves may fly convuls'd across to some
high-cedar'd lair;
But the forgotten eye is still fast lidded to the
ground,
As Palmer's, that with weariness, mid-desert
shrine hath found,
At such a time the soul's a child, in childhood is
the brain;
Forgotten is the worldly heart—alone, it beats
in vain.—
Aye, if a madman could have leave to pass a
healthful day
To tell his forehead's swoon and faint when
first began decay,
He might make tremble many a one whose
spirit had gone forth
To find a Bard's low cradle-place about the
silent North!
Scanty the hour and few the steps beyond the
bourn of care,
Beyond the sweet and bitter world,—beyond
it unaware!
Scanty the hour and few the steps, because a
longer stay

STAFFA

Would bar return, and make a man forget his
mortal way :
O horrible ! to lose the sight of well remember'd
face,
Of Brother's eyes, of Sister's brow—constant
to every place ;
Filling the air, as on we move, with portraiture
intense ;
More warm than those heroic tints that pain a
painter's sense,
When shapes of old come striding by, and
visages of old,
Locks shining black, hair scanty grey, and
passions manifold.
No, no, that horror cannot be, for at the cable's
length
Man feels the gentle anchor pull and gladdens
in its strength : —
One hour, half-idiot, he stands by mossy
waterfall,
But in the very next he reads his soul's
memorial :—
He reads it on the mountain's height, where
chance he may sit down
Upon rough marble diadem—that hill's eternal
crown.
Yet be his anchor e'er so fast, room is there
for a prayer
That man may never lose his mind on moun-
tains black and bare ;
That he may stray league after league some
great birth-place to find
And keep his vision clear from speck, his
inward sight unblind.

MEG MERRILIES

1

OLD MEG she was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors :
Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors.

2

Her apples were swart blackberries,
Her currants pods o' broom ;
Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,
Her book a churchyard tomb.

3

Her Brothers were the craggy hills,
Her Sisters larchen trees—
Alone with her great family
She liv'd as she did please.

4

No breakfast had she many a morn,
No dinner many a noon,
And 'stead of supper she would stare
Full hard against the Moon •

5

But every morn of woodbine fresh
She made her garlanding,
And every night the dark glen Yew
She wove, and she would sing.

6

And with her fingers old and brown
She plaited Mats o' Rushes,
And gave them to the Cottagers
She met among the Bushes.

• 7

Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen
And tall as Amazon ;
An old red blanket cloak she wore ;
A chip hat had she on.
God rest her aged bones somewhere -
She died full long ago !

STAFFA

NOT Aladdin magian
Ever such a work began ;
Not the wizard of the Dee
Ever such a dream could see ;
Not St John, in Patmos' Isle,
In the passion of his toil,
When he saw the churches seven,
Golden aisled, built up in heaven,
Gaz'd at such a ragged wonder.
As I stood its roofing under,
Lo ! I saw one sleeping there,
On the marble cold and bare.

JOHN KEATS

While the surges wash'd his feet,
 And his garments white did beat
 Drench'd about the sombre rocks,
 On his neck his well-grown locks,
 Lifted dry above the main,
 Were upon the curl again.
 "What is this? and what art thou?"
 Whisper'd I, and touch'd his brow;
 "What art thou? and what is this?"
 Whisper'd I, and strove to kiss
 The spirit's hand, to wake his eyes;
 Up he started in a trice:
 "I am Lycidas," said he,
 "Fam'd in funeral minstrelsy!
 This was architectur'd thus
 By the great Oceanus!—
 Here his mighty waters play
 Hollow organs all the day;
 Here by turns his dolphins all,
 Finny palmers great and small,
 Come to pay devotion due—
 Each a mouth of pearls must strew.
 Many a mortal of these days,
 Dares to pass our sacred ways,
 Dares to touch audaciously
 This Cathedral of the Sea!
 I have been the pontiff-priest
 Where the waters never rest,
 Where a fledgy sea-bird choir
 Soars for ever; holy fire
 I have hid from mortal man;
 Proteus is my Sacristan.
 But the dulled eye of mortal
 Hath pass'd beyond the rocky portal;
 So for ever will I leave
 Such a taint, and soon unweave
 All the magic of the place."
 So saying, with a Spirit's glance
 He dived!

ROBIN HOOD

NO! those days are gone away,
 And their hours are old and gray,
 And their minutes buried all
 Under the down-trodden pall
 Of the leaves of many years:
 Many times have winter's shears,

Frozen North, and chilling East,
 Sound'd tempests to the feast
 Of the forest's whispering fleeces,
 Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,
 And the twanging bow no more;
 Ivory is the ivory shrill
 Past the heath and up the hill;
 There is no mid-forest laugh,
 Where lone Echo gives the half
 To some wight, amaz'd to hear
 Jestings, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
 You may go, with sun or moon,
 Or the seven stars to light you,
 Or the polar ray to right you;
 But you never may behold
 Little John, or Robin bold;
 Never one, of all the clan,
 Thrumming on an empty can
 Some old hunting ditty, while
 He doth his green way beguile
 To fair hostess Merriment,
 Down beside the pasture Trent;
 For he left the merry tale
 Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din;
 Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
 Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
 Idling in the "green shawe;"
 All are gone away and past!
 And if Robin should be cast
 Sudden from his turfed grave,
 And if Marian should have
 Once again her forest days,
 She would weep, and he would cry:
 He would swear, for all his oaks,
 Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes,
 Have rotted on the briny seas;
 She would weep that her wild bees
 Sang not to her—strange! that honey
 Can't be got without hard money!

So it is: yet let us sing,
 Honour to the old bow-string!

IN A DREAR-NIGHTED DECEMBER

Honour to the bugle-horn !
 Honour to the woods unshorn !
 Honour to the Lincoln green !
 Honour to the archer keen !
 Honour to tight little John,
 And the horse he rode upon !
 Honour to bold Robin Hood,
 Sleeping in the underwood !
 Honour to maid Marian,
 And to all the Sherwood-clan !
 Though their days have hurried by
 Let us two a burden try.

WHAT CAN I DO TO DRIVE AWAY

WHAT can I do to drive away
 Remembrance from my eyes? for
 they have seen,

Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen!
 Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,
 What can I do to kill it and be free
 In my old liberty?
 When every fair one that I saw was fair
 Enough to catch me in but half a snare,
 Not keep me there :
 When, how'er poor or particolour'd things,
 My muse had wings,
 And ever ready was to take her course
 Whither I bent her force,
 Unintellectual, yet divine to me ;—
 Divine, I say !—What sea-bird o'er the sea
 Is a philosopher the while he goes
 Winging along where the great water throes ?
 How shall I do
 To get anew
 Those moulted feathers, and so mount once
 more
 Above, above
 The reach of fluttering Love,
 And make him cower lowly while I soar ?
 Shall I gulp wine? No, that is vulgarism,
 A heresy and schism,
 Foisted into the canon-law of love ;—
 No,—wine is only sweet to happy men ;
 More dismal cares
 Seize on me unawares,—
 Where shall I learn to get my peace again ?

To banish thoughts of that most hateful land,
 Dungeon of my friends, that wicked strand
 Where they were wreck'd and live a wrecked
 life ;

That monstrous region, whose dull rivers pour,
 Ever from their sordid urns unto the shore,
 Unown'd of any weedy-haired gods ;
 Whose winds, all zephyrless, hold scourging
 rods,

Iced in the great lakes, to afflict mankind ;
 Whose rank-grown forests, frosted, black, and
 blind,

Would fright a Dryad ; whose harsh herbage
 meads

Make lean and lank the starv'd ox while he
 feeds ;

There bad flowers have no scent, birds no sweet
 song,

And great unerring Nature once seems wrong.

O, for some sunny spell

To dissipate the shadows of this hell !

Say they are gone, — with the new dawning light
 Steps forth my lady bright !

O, let me once more rest

My soul upon that dazzling breast !

Let once again these aching arms be placed,

The tender gaolers of thy waist !

And let me feel that warm breath here and there

To spread a rapture in my very hair,—

O, the sweetness of the pain !

Give me those lips again !

Enough ! Enough ! it is enough for me

To dream of thee !

IN A DREAR-NIGHTED DECEMBER

IN a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy tree,
 Thy branches ne'er remember
 Their green felicity :
 The north cannot undo them
 With a sleety whistle through them,
 Nor frozen thawings glue them
 From budding at the prime.

JOHN KEATS

2

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look ;
But with a sweet forgetting,
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

3

Ah! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy !
But were there ever any
Writhed not at passed joy ?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it
Nor numbed sense to steel it,
Was never said in rhyme.

DRAMATIC FRAGMENT

KING STEPHEN

A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Field of Battle.*

Alarum. Enter King STEPHEN, Knights, and Soldiers.

Stephen.

IF shame can on a soldier's vein-swoll'n front
Spread deeper crimson than the battle's
toil,

Blush in your casing helmets! for see, see!
Yonder my chivalry, my pride of war,
Wrench'd with an iron hand from firm array,
Are routed loose about the plashy meads,
Of honour forfeit. O that my known voice
Could reach your dastard ears, and fright you
more!

Fly, cowards, fly! Gloucester is at your backs!
Throw your slack bridles o'er the flurried manes,
Ply well the rowel with faint trembling heels,
Scampering to death at last!

1st Knight. The enemy
Bears his flaunt standard close upon their rear.

2nd Knight. Sure of a bloody prey, seeing
the fens

Will swamp them girth-deep.

Stephen. Over head and ears.
No matter! 'Tis a gallant enemy;
How like a comet he goes streaming on.
But we must plague him in the flank,—hey,
friends?

We are well breath'd—follow!

Enter Earl BALDWIN and Soldiers, as defeated.

Stephen. De Redvers!
What is the monstrous bugbear that can fright
Baldwin?

Baldwin. No scarecrow, but the fortunate star
Of boisterous Chester, whose fell truncheon now
Points level to the goal of victory.

This way he comes, and if you would maintain
Your person unaffronted by vile odds,
Take horse, my Lord.

Stephen. And which way spur for life?
Now I thank heaven I am in the toils,
That soldiers may bear witness how my arm
Can burst the meshes. Not the eagle more
Loves to beat up against a tyrannous blast,
Than I to meet the torrent of my foes.
This is a brag,—be't so,—but if I fall,
Carve it upon my 'scutcheon'd sepulchre.
On, fellow soldiers! Earl of Redvers, back!
Not twenty Earls of Chester shall brow-beat
The diadem. [*Exeunt. Alarum.*]

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Field.*

*Trumpets sounding a Victory. Enter
GLOUCESTER, Knights, and Forces.*

Gloucester. Now may we lift our bruised vizors
up
And take the flattering freshness of the air,
While the wide din of battle dies away
Into times past, yet to be echoed sure
In the silent pages of our chroniclers.

1st Knight. Will Stephen's death be mark'd
there, my good Lord,
Or that we give him lodging in yon towers?

Gloucester. Fain would I know the great
usurper's fate.

Enter two Captains severally.

1st Captain. My lord!

2nd Captain. Most noble Earl!

1st Captain. The King—

2nd Captain. • The Empress greets—
Gloucester. What of the King?

JOHN KEATS

1st Captain. He sole and lone maintains
A hopeless bustle 'mid our swarming arms,
And with a nimble savageness attacks,
Escapes, makes fiercer onset, then anew
Eludes death, giving death to most that dare
Trespass within the circuit of his sword!
He must by this have fallen. Baldwin is taken;
And for the Duke of Bretagne, like a stag
He flies, for the Welsh beagles to hunt down.
God save the Empress!

Glocester. Now our dreaded Queen:
What message from her Highness?

2nd Captain. Royal Maud
From the throng'd towers of Lincoln hath
look'd down,

Like Pallas from the walls of Ilion,
And seen her enemies havock'd at her feet.
She greets most noble Glocester from her heart,
Intreating him, his captains, and brave knights,
To grace a banquet. The high city gates
Are envious which shall see your triumph pass;
The streets are full of music.

Enter 2nd Knight.

Glocester. Whence come you?

2nd Knight. From Stephen, my good Prince
—Stephen! Stephen!

Glocester. Why do you make such echoing
of his name?

2nd Knight. Because I think, my lord, he is
no man,
But a fierce demon, 'nointed safe from wounds,
And misbaptized with a Christian name.

Glocester. A mighty soldier!—Does he still
hold out?

2nd Knight. He shames our victory. His
valour still
Keeps elbow-room amid our eager swords,
And holds our bladed falchions all aloof.
His gleaming battle-axe, being slaughter-sick,
Smote on the morion of a Flemish knight,
Broke short in his hand; upon the which he
flung
The heft away with such a vengeful force
It paunch'd the Earl of Chester's horse, who
then
Spleen-hearted came in full career at him.

Glocester. Did no one take him at a vantage
then?

2nd Knight. Three then with tiger leap upon
him flew,
Whom, with his sword swift drawn and nimbly
held,

He stung away again, and stood to breathe;
Smiling. Anon upon him rush'd once more
A throng of foes, and in this renew'd strife,
My sword met his and snapp'd off at the hilt.

Glocester. Come, lead me to this Mars and
let us move

In silence, not insulting his sad doom
With clamorous trumpets. To the Empress
bear

My salutation as befits the time.

[*Exeunt GLOCESTER and Forces.*]

SCENE III.—*The Field of Battle. Enter*
STEPHEN unarmed.

Stephen. Another sword! And what if I
could seize
One from Bellona's gleaming armoury,
Or choose the fairest of her sheaved spears!
Where are my enemies? Here, close at hand,
Here come the testy brood. O, for a sword!
I'm faint—a biting sword! A noble sword!
A hedge-stake—or a ponderous stone to hurl
With brawny vengeance, like the labourer Cain.
Come on! Farewell my kingdom, and all hail
Thou superb, plumed, and helmeted renown!
All hail! I would not truck this brilliant day
To rule in Pylos with a Nestor's beard—
Come on!

Enter DE KAIMS and Knights, &c.

De Kaims. Is't madness, or a hunger after
death,
That makes thee thus unarm'd throw taunts
at us?

Yield, Stephen, or my sword's point dips in
The gloomy current of a traitor's heart.

Stephen. Do it, De Kaims, I will not budge
an inch.

De Kaims. Yes, of thy madness thou shalt
take the meed.

Stephen. Darest thou?

De Kaims. How, dare, against a man dis-
arm'd?

KING STEPHEN

Stephen. What weapons has the lion but himself?

Come not near me, De Kaims, for by the price
Of all the glory I have won this day,
Being a king, I will not yield alive
To any but the second man of the realm,
Robert of Gloucester.

De Kaims. Thou shalt vail to me.

Stephen. Shall I, when I have sworn against it, sir?

Thou think'st it brave to take a breathing king,

That, on a court-day bow'd to haughty Maud,
The awed presence-chamber may be bold
To whisper, There's the man who took alive
Stephen—me—prisoner. Certes, De Kaims,
The ambition is a noble one.

De Kaims. 'Tis true.
And, Stephen, I must compass it.

Stephen. No, no,
Do not tempt me to throttle you on the gorge,
Or with my gauntlet crush your hollow breast,
Just when your knighthood is grown ripe and full

For lordship.

A Soldier. Is an honest yeoman's spear
Of no use at a need? Take that.

Stephen. Ah, dastard!

De Kaims. What, you are vulnerable! my prisoner!

Stephen. No, not yet. I disclaim it, and demand

Death as a sovereign right unto a king
Who 'sdains to yield to any but his peer,
If not in title, yet in noble deeds,
The Earl of Gloucester. Stab to the hilt, De Kaims,

For I will never by mean hands be led
From this so famous field. Do you hear! Be quick!

[*Trumpets. Enter the Earl of CHESTER and Knights.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Presence Chamber. Queen MAUD in a Chair of State, the Earls of GLOUCESTER and CHESTER, Lords, Attendants.*

Maud. Gloucester, no more. I will behold that Boulogne:
Set him before me. Not for the poor sake

Of regal pomp and a vain-glorious hour,
As thou with wary speech, yet near enough,
Hast hinted.

Gloucester. Faithful counsel have I given;
If wary, for your Highness' benefit.

Maud. The Heavens forbid that I should not think so,

For by thy valour have I won this realm,
Which by thy wisdom I will ever keep.
To sage advisers let me ever bend
A meek attentive ear, so that they treat
Of the wide kingdom's rule and government,
Not trenching on our actions personal.
Advised, not school'd, I would be; and henceforth

Spoken to in clear, plain, and open terms,
Not side-ways sermon'd at.

Gloucester. Then, in plain terms,
Once more for the fallen king—

Maud. Your pardon, brother,
I would no more of that; for, as I said,
'Tis not for wordly pomp I wish to see
The rebel, but as dooming judge to give
A sentence something worthy of his guilt.

Gloucester. It must be so, I'll bring him to your presence. [*Exit GLOUCESTER.*]

Maud. A meaner summoner might do as well.

My Lord of Chester, is't true what I hear
Of Stephen of Boulogne, our prisoner,
That he, as a fit penance for his crimes,
Eats wholesome, sweet, and palatable food
Off Gloucester's golden dishes—drinks pure wine,
Lodges soft?

Chester. More than that, my gracious Queen,
Has anger'd me. The noble Earl, methinks,
Full soldier as he is, and without peer
In counsel, dreams too much among his books.
It may read well, but sure 'tis out of date
To play the Alexander with Darius.

Maud. Truth! I think so. By Heavens, it shall not last!

Chester. It would amaze your Highness now to mark

How Gloucester overstrains his courtesy
To that crime-loving rebel, that Boulogne—

Maud. That ingrate!

Chester. For whose vast ingratitude

JOHN KEATS

To our late sovereign lord, your noble sire,
The generous Earl condoles in his mishaps,
And with a sort of lackeying friendliness
Talks off the mighty frowning from his brow,
Woos him to hold a duet in a smile,
Or, if it please him, play an hour at chess—

Maud. A perjured slave!

Chester. And for his perjury,
Glocester has fit rewards—nay, I believe,
He sets his bustling household's wits at work
For flatteries to ease this Stephen's hours,

And make a heaven of his purgatory;
Adorning bondage with the pleasant gloss
Of feasts and music, and all idle shows
Of indoor pageantry; while syren whispers,
Predestined for his ear, 'scape as half-check'd
From lips the courtliest and the rubiest
Of all the realm, admiring of his deeds.

Maud. A frost upon his summer!

Chester. A queen's nod
Can make his June December. Here he comes.

* * * *

